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DANTE
AND THE MYSTICS

The Science of Love.
(Paradiso XXII. Botticelli)

DANTE

AND THE MYSTICS

A STUDY OF THE MYSTICAL ASPECT OF THE DIVINA COMMEDIA AND ITS RELATIONS WITH SOME OF ITS MEDIAEVAL SOURCES

BY

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WITH THREE PHOTOGRAVURE PLATES

"Io, che al divino dall' umano,
All' eterno dal tempo era venuto."

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TO

THE HONOURABLE

WILLIAM WARREN VERNON

I DEDICATE THESE STUDIES OF THE POET TO THE
INTERPRETATION OF WHOSE WORKS HIS LIFE
HAS BEEN DEVOTED.

PREFACE

The following studies include portions of courses of public lectures delivered during the last three academical sessions at University College, London. They have been completely rewritten, and are now presented in a somewhat different form. As the title of the book indicates, its main purpose is to lay stress upon the mystical aspect of the *Divina Commedia*, to trace the influence upon Dante of the earlier mystics from St. Augustine onwards, and to illustrate the mystical tendency of the sacred poem by its analogies with the writings of other, contemporary or even later, masters in the same "science of love." I have, however, diverged a little from this theme, here and there, more particularly when considering the relations between Dante and St. Bernard, and the poet's attitude towards the Franciscan movement.

It will be seen that I have assumed, without discussion, the authenticity of the Letter to Can Grande. While recognising the weight of many of the arguments that have been brought forward in Italy on the other side, I find myself still in full

agreement with what has been so admirably written in its defence by Professor Torraca and Dr. Moore. I venture to hope that my investigations as to the influence of St. Augustine, St. Bernard, and Richard of St. Victor upon the sacred poem will not be regarded as valueless, even by those scholars who do not accept the appeal to the authority of these three mystics, in the Letter, as a genuine utterance of Dante.

Antonio Lubin was undoubtedly a pioneer in attempting to interpret the mysticism and allegory of the *Divina Commedia* in the light of the Letter to Can Grande, and I have developed some of the suggestions given in his preparatory studies. Among later writers, I am considerably indebted on special points to Professor d'Ovidio's various volumes; to Dr. Giuseppe Boffito's recent essay on Dante's relations with the Augustinians; to the studies of Felice Tocco and Umberto Cosmo in connection with the Franciscan influences in the sacred poem; to Père Mandonnet's monograph on Siger of Brabant and the Abbé Mignon's volumes on Hugh of St. Victor; to the first series of Dr. Moore's *Studies in Dante* (now classical in a double sense); to Dr. Paget Toynbee; and to the other scholars to whom reference is made in my pages. My grateful thanks

are due to Mr. Wicksteed, not only for the assistance that I have derived from his published works, but also for personal suggestion and advice given on many occasions. Also, I would particularly acknowledge my debt to the two illuminating essays on Mysticism by George Tyrrell included in the first series of the *Faith of the Millions*, and to Baron Friedrich von Hügel's monumental study of the *Mystical Element of Religion*.

Save where otherwise stated, I am responsible for the translations included in this volume; but I have occasionally borrowed phrases from the renderings given by Mr. William Warren Vernon in his *Readings*, which adhere so closely to the sense of the Tuscan idiom, and from the various versions of the works of Dante by Mr. Wicksteed and Mr. Okey. In quoting from St. John of the Cross, I have somewhat modified the standard English version of David Lewis, which I have otherwise generally adopted. The chapter on Dionysius being intended merely as a study of the Dionysian influences upon Dante, I have followed, not the original Greek, but the mediaeval Latin translations of Joannes Scotus Erigena and Joannes Sarracenus, as it is in this form that the Dionysian writings would have reached the poet; but I have retained the arrangement of chapters and sections

as in the Greek, and am slightly indebted, here and there, to the English translation by Mr. John Parker. For a similar reason, I have adhered to the Latin, instead of the German, text of the revelations of Mechthild of Magdeburg. Through an unaccountable oversight, I did not consult Lubin's still important essay on Matelda until the body of the present work had left my hands, and I find, with regret, that I have similarly neglected the recent studies of this question by Manfredi Porena, Giuseppe Picciòla, Augusto Mancini, and Michele Scherillo. The two last-named writers have ably supported the identification, first suggested by Lubin, of " Matelda " with Mechthild of Hackeborn; and, should these pages reach their eyes, I trust that, with the urbanity characteristic of Italian scholarship, they will accept this expression of my regret for not having given due prominence to their researches.

My references throughout are to the works of Dante in Dr. Moore's Oxford edition, but I have occasionally, in minor points, followed Professor Casini's text of the *Divina Commedia*, and, in quoting the *Vita Nuova*, have usually preferred the text as given by Professor Barbi. For the benefit of English readers, I have adopted the numeration of the Psalms in the Authorised Version. I am indebted for the index

to my sister, Miss Monica Gardner, the biographer in English of Adam Mickiewicz.

I may add that I have not scrupled to quote the same passages from Dante on several occasions. The study of the mediaeval sources of the *Divina Commedia*, especially from the mystical aspect, is mainly one of analogies and general tendencies; Dante is *theologus nullius dogmatis expers;* but he writes throughout as an independent thinker, and above all as a poet, illuminating with imagination, kindling with passion, and rehandling in the light of personal experience, what was the common literary and philosophical heritage of his age.

E. G. G.

University College, London.
September 8, 1912.

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DANTE AND THE MYSTICS

CHAPTER I

THE MYSTICISM OF DANTE

I. Religion as an experience of Eternity; Scholasticism, Mysticism, and Love. II. The incipient mysticism of the *Vita Nuova*; the imperfect mysticism of the *Convivio*; relations of the latter with the *Divina Commedia*; the mystical doctrine of Love in the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*. III. Subjective and objective mysticism; the appeal to authority and the personal confession of the *Letter to Can Grande*; the *Divina Commedia* and religious experience.

I

DANTE describes himself in the *Paradiso* as one who, while still in the flesh, *all' eterno dal tempo era venuto*, "had come from time to the eternal."[1] Speaking generally, it may be said that a mystic is one who thus conceives of religion as an experience of eternity; one who holds that the soul, even in this life, can unite herself with the Divine, and who believes in the possibility and the actuality of certain experiences in which the mind is brought into contact with what it believes to be God, and enjoys fruition of what it takes as the ultimate reality.

[1] *Par.* xxxi. 37.

We find admirable, though partial, expression of this in two of our own poets. Thus Henry Vaughan:—

"I saw Eternity the other night,
Like a great ring of pure and endless light,
All calm, as it was bright;
And round beneath it, Time in hours, days, years,
Driven by the spheres
Like a vast shadow mov'd; in which the world
And all her train were hurl'd." [1]

And, again, a more modern poet, Francis Thompson:—

"I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds;
Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds
From the hid battlements of Eternity,
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then
Round the half-glimpsèd turrets slowly wash again;
But not ere him who summoneth
I first have seen, enwound
With glooming robes purpureal, cypress-crowned;
His name I know, and what his trumpet saith." [2]

The famous author of *Il Santo*, Antonio Fogazzaro, has said: *Dante è mistico in amore, in religione è teologo.* And a French writer, Dr. Albert Leclère, has argued that there is an inconsistency, however unconscious on the poet's part, between his love and his religion, and that, even in the Empyrean Heaven, Dante does not really succeed in reconciling his worship of Christ with his worship of a creature, but simply makes his Christianity serve the supreme interest of his passion.[3]

[1] *The World.* [2] *The Hound of Heaven.*
[3] *Le Mysticisme catholique et l'Ame de Dante*, p. 103. Cf. E. Pistelli, in *Bullettino della Società Dantesca Italiana*, N.S., xiv., pp. 121-123.

Such a representation of Dante's love and Dante's religion seems to me an erroneous one. Theology is, for the poet of the *Divina Commedia*, identical in the main with Scholasticism, and for him the distinction that we are frequently tempted to draw, between Scholasticism and Mysticism, hardly exists. They are but the two roads, of science and experience, along which the soul travels towards the same goal; and, at times, they merely present two aspects of the same truth, even as, in the Earthly Paradise, the double nature of the symbolical Gryphon is seen reflected in the eyes of Beatrice.[1]

The relations of Scholasticism and Mysticism are singularly illustrated in the legend of St. Thomas Aquinas. This most typical and highest representative of the Schoolmen ended as a sheer mystic. In his commentary on the *De Trinitate* of Boëthius, Aquinas had written: "We cannot in this present life attain to a knowledge of God Himself beyond the fact that He exists. And nevertheless, among those who know that He is, the one knows this more perfectly than the other."[2] Again, in the *Summa Theologica*, discussing the question "whether any one in this life can see God in His essence," he answers with a somewhat qualified negative. God, he says,

[1] *Purg.* xxxi. 118-126. But see Baron von Hügel's masterly analysis of the relations between the philosophical or speculative, and the volitional or mystical elements in religion, *The Mystical Element of Religion*, I., chapter ii., and cf. below, p. 271.

[2] *In librum Boëtii de Trinitate, prooemii explanatio*, q. 1, a. 2 (*S. Thomae Aquinatis opera omnia*, Parma edition, tom. xvii. p. 354).

cannot be seen in His essence by a man unless he is severed from this mortal life; the soul, while we live in this life, has her being in corporeal matter, and cannot be so lifted up to the supreme of things intelligible which is the Divine Essence. But "even as God sometimes works supernaturally by a miracle in corporeal things, so also has He elevated the minds of some, while living in the flesh, but not making use of the senses of the flesh, supernaturally and beyond the common order, even to the vision of His essence; as Augustine says of Moses, who was the teacher of the Jews, and of Paul, who was the teacher of the Gentiles."[1] Now it is precisely such a direct mystical experience that Guglielmo di Tocco, whose work is contemporaneous with the *Divina Commedia*, attributes to Aquinas himself, at the very end of his life, after he had abruptly laid down his pen, leaving the *Summa Theologica* to be completed by another hand. The Angelical Doctor, with his companion, Fra Rainaldo da Piperno, was staying at his sister's castle of San Severino, when he had a prolonged ecstasy, in which he seemed entirely alienated from his senses. When he returned to himself: "He said with sighs: Son Rainaldo, I will tell thee in secret, forbidding thee to disclose it to any while I live. The end of my writing has come, for such things have been revealed to me that all that I have

[1] *Summa Theologica*, I., q. 12, a. 11. Cf. *ibid.*, II. ii., q. 175 (*de raptu*).

written and taught seems to me very little; and from this I hope in my God that, even as my teaching is ended, so my life will soon close." And his biographer, remembering what St. Thomas himself had written about such ecstasies, adds: "For as God wondrously revealed many things above human understanding to those who were pre-eminent in the law of Moses, which brought the law of justice to the Jews, and to Paul who preached the law of grace to the Gentiles; so it pleased Him to reveal some supernatural light of mind to this blessed Thomas too, who, from the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, received the rolled-up book of both laws, and by his exposition offered it open to the whole Church—that he might believe that greater things remained which he saw not by natural understanding." [1]

It may, indeed, be said that, while Scholasticism is the body of Dante's religion, Mysticism is the soul, and Love the animating spirit of both. Aquinas, discussing the question *utrum charitas augeatur in infinitum*, "whether charity is capable of infinite increase," declares that, even in this present life (*in statu viae*), no bounds can be set to the increase of charity: "Charity, by reason of its very nature, hath no limit to its increase, for it is a certain participation in the infinite charity, which is the Holy

[1] Guglielmo di Tocco, *Vita S. Thomae Aquinatis*, cap. viii., § 48 (*Acta Sanctorum*, March, tom. i.). This passage probably suggested the allegorical pictures of the Triumph of St. Thomas.

Spirit." [1] Read "love" for "charity," as we may legitimately do, and it was such a love for a woman that first set Dante on the mystical road through time to eternity, and led him along it to its supreme goal:—

"O donna, in cui la mia speranza vige,
E che soffristi per la mia salute
In inferno lasciar le tue vestige;
Di tante cose, quante io ho vedute,
Dal tuo potere e dalla tua bontate
Riconosco la grazia e la virtute.
Tu m'hai di servo tratto a libertate
Per tutte quelle vie, per tutti i modi,
Che di ciò fare avei la potestate.
La tua magnificenza in me custodi,
Sì che l'anima mia, che fatta hai sana,
Piacente a te dal corpo si disnodi." [2]

It has been finely said by George Tyrrell: "All love is mystical, in that it refuses the exact analysis of reason, which, without contradicting, it ineffably transcends." [3] In the relations between Dante and Beatrice we have the key to the poet's mysticism, and the *Vita Nuova* already shows how his love for her became the guide to the fruition of the Divine.

[1] *Summa Theologica*, II. ii., q. 24, a. 7.

[2] "O lady, in whom my hope hath strength, and who didst endure for my salvation to leave in hell thy footprints;

"Of all the things that I have seen, I acknowledge the grace and the virtue from thy power and from thy excellence.

"Thou hast drawn me from a slave to liberty by all those ways, by all the means, by which thou hadst the power of so doing.

"Preserve thy bounteousness in me, so that my soul, which thou hast made sound, may be loosened from the body, still pleasing to thee."—*Par.* xxxi. 79-90. The last three lines are a prayer for final perseverance, as in *Par.* xxxiii. 34-39.

[3] *The Faith of the Millions*, i., p. 283.

II

A mystical note is struck at the outset of the *Vita Nuova*, in the first appearance of Beatrice to the poet's eyes, when he was "almost at the end of his ninth year":—

"From thenceforward I say that Love held lordship over my soul, which was so early wedded to him, and he began to exercise over me such great assurance and such great mastery, through the power that my imagination gave him, that it behoved me to do perfectly all that was his pleasure. He commanded me many times that I should seek to see this youngest of the Angels: wherefore I in my childhood often went seeking her; and I saw her of so noble and praiseworthy bearing, that certainly of her could be said that word of the poet Homer: *She seemed not daughter of mortal man, but of God.* And albeit her image, which continually abode with me, was an exultation of love to rule over me, nevertheless it was of so noble a virtue, that no time did it suffer that Love should sway me without the faithful counsel of Reason, there where such counsel were useful to hear."[1]

This is closely analogous with that first revelation of the Divine in early childhood, which is related of so many mystical saints: a vision foreshadowing the spiritual espousals of the soul, and leaving her in like manner the handmaiden of celestial love. Thus

[1] *Vita Nuova*, § 2.

St. Catherine of Siena saw, or thought in after life that she had seen, her first vision of her heavenly Bridegroom when she was six years old: "From that hour," writes her biographer and confessor, Fra Raimondo, who had heard the vision from her lips, "Catherine began to show herself no more a child, but adult in holy virtues, gravity of bearing, and ripeness of wisdom; in such sort that, in her actions, nothing of childishness nor immaturity was displayed, but rather an age inspiring veneration. For, already, the fire of divine love had taken hold of her heart, through the virtue of which her understanding was illumined, her will inflamed, her memory strengthened, and her outward actions showed themselves in everything in harmony with the rules of the divine law." [1] Similarly, a fifteenth-century follower of St. Catherine, the beata Osanna Andreasi of Mantua, tells us of a religious experience that came to her in her sixth year, and completely coloured all her subsequent thought and action. In the form which her memory gave to this experience, as she wrote it down for Girolamo da Monteoliveto many years afterwards, a great voice said in her heart: *Life and death consist in loving God;* a vision followed, in which she was led by an Angel to behold the whole universe bound together by love and proclaiming the law of love, from the God of Love Himself and the Mother of

[1] *S. Catharinae Senensis Legenda* (*Acta Sanctorum*, April, tom. iii.), I. § 40.

the Incarnate Word, down to the beasts of land and sea, the plants and inanimate things. Then, in her own words, "she feared greatly because of the vision she had received, knowing herself not to be a true and perfect lover of God, as she needed to be"; she prayed for guidance along the way of love, and her "new life" began, in which (she says in a letter) "all things that I saw and heard represented God to me in my mind, with such great knowledge and taste, feeling, and sweetness of God, that many times my spirit was absorbed in Christ . . . and it seemed to me that Christ ever discoursed in my heart, whether I walked, or stood, or conversed with others." [1]

The first realisation of the significance of beauty by the youthful Dante, the first more explicitly religious experience in the still younger Catherine and Osanna, leads in each to the revulsion or renovation of being which is the *Vita Nuova*—the "new life," in which, in Crashaw's great phrase, Love is "absolute sole lord of life and death." [2] In part, the apparent difference is one of degree rather than of kind; and in part, to adopt a scholastic expression, it is in the nature of the recipient—troubadour or saint.

For, among the many things to which Dante is

[1] Hieronymo Monteolivetano, *Libretto della Vita e Transito della beata Osanna da Mantua* (Bologna, 1524), ff. 5-10, 116 *v.*

[2] *A Hymn to the Name and Honour of the admirable Saint Teresa.*

heir, he is heir to the troubadour tradition. Throughout the *Vita Nuova*, the perfect troubadour and the incipient mystic are reacting upon each other; troubadour conventions and troubadour motives are receiving mystical colouring; mystical feeling, and, at the end, what seems mystical experience, are finding expression in troubadour phraseology.[1] And, throughout, the mystic is gradually absorbing the troubadour.

This is very clearly seen when we compare the first with the last poem of the book. In the opening sonnet, *A ciascun' alma presa e gentil core*, "To each enamoured soul and gentle heart,"[2] with its invitation to the *trovatori* to a *tenzone*, a contest or correspondence in rhyme, written ostensibly in 1283 in the poet's eighteenth year, Dante is merely following the fashion of his age, a fashion that had been transplanted from Provence into Italy. And the dream which is the subject of the sonnet, the dream in which Beatrice at Love's bidding eats of the heart of her worshipper which Love holds aflame in his hand, is simply investing with poetical beauty and transforming with spiritual significance a troubadour tradition: a tradition that appears in many forms, in oriental as well as western literature, usually associated with a sordid and horrible tragedy of

[1] I am, it will be understood, using the word "troubadour" somewhat loosely, to include the Italian poets of the Duecento as well as their Provençal predecessors.

[2] *V. N.*, § 3 (son. i.).

jealousy and revenge.[1] The closing sonnet, *Oltre la spera che più larga gira*, "Beyond the sphere that hath the widest circling,"[2] written apparently in 1292, nine years later, tells of a spiritual ascent in which a "new understanding," *intelligenza nuova*, implanted by love, draws the poet's thought as a "pilgrim spirit," beyond the last of the moving spheres, to look upon the glory of Beatrice in the Empyrean Heaven. This is, as it were, a poetical rendering, into the language of exalted human love, of the special theme of the mystics, according to the famous definition formerly attributed to St. Bonaventura, in which mystical theology is "the stretching out of the soul into God by the desire of love."[3] It is the mystical subject of the *Divina Commedia* in germ. But, obviously, it is not yet mysticism in the fullest and truest sense of the term. It is an intellectual attempt on the poet's part to conceive of the glory of his lady in Paradise: not yet a personal experience of eternity. But now such a personal experience comes, on a totally different plane from anything which has preceded it in the *Vita Nuova*:—

[1] Cf. note in A. D'Ancona's edition of the *Vita Nuova*, 2nd edition, pp. 32-36; M. Scherillo, *Alcuni capitoli della biografia di Dante*, pp. 225-233; A. C. Lee, *The Decameron, its Sources and Analogues*, pp. 143-152.

[2] *V. N.*, § 42 (son. xxv.).

[3] *Extensio animae in Deum per amoris desiderium* (*Mystica Theologia, prologus*, in the "Vatican edition" of the works of St. Bonaventura, tom. vii., p. 699). The usual reading, *extensio amoris*, is erroneous. The precise date and authorship of this work is uncertain; its writer was probably a Carthusian. Cf. *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae opera omnia*, Quaracchi edition, tom. x. p. 24.

" After this sonnet there appeared to me a wondrous vision, in which I saw things which made me purpose to speak no more of this blessed one, until such time as I could treat of her more worthily. And, to come to that, I labour all I can, even as she knoweth verily. So that, if it shall be the pleasure of Him, through whom all things live, that my life continue for some years, I hope to say of her what was never said of any woman. And then may it please Him, who is the lord of courtesy, that my soul may go hence to see the glory of her lady, to wit, of that blessed Beatrice, who gloriously looketh upon the face of Him who is blessed through all ages." [1]

This *mirabil visione*, with which the *Vita Nuova* ends, is clearly no mere poetical phantasy, but a true religious experience, foreshadowing that greater vision which was to become the subject of the *Divina Commedia*.

The " stretching out of the soul into God by the desire of love," thus foreshadowed in the *Vita Nuova*, is the mystical theme of the *Divina Commedia*. But, between the composition of these two works, Dante began and left unfinished the *Convivio*.

There is, needless to say, a strong mystical current in the *Convivio*, more particularly in the wonderful

[1] *V. N.*, §43. Cf. *Inf.* ii. 16-17: *Però se l'avversario d'ogni male cortese i fu.* Dante's speaking of God as *sire della cortesia*, reminds us of the words attributed to St. Francis (*Fioretti*, cap. 37): *La cortesia è una delle proprietà di Dio.* Similarly, Mother Julian of Norwich lays stress upon God being " our courteous lord." Cf. her *Revelations of Divine Love*, caps. 7 and 76.

third treatise. It is there, in a passage based partly upon the pseudo-Aristotelian (in reality, Neo-Platonic) book *De Causis*, that Dante explicitly formulates a mystical doctrine of love:—

"Love, truly taken and subtly considered, is nought else than spiritual union of the soul and of the thing loved; to which union the soul, of her own nature, runs swift or slow, according as she is free or impeded. And the reason of this natural tendency may be this. Every substantial form proceeds from its own first cause, which is God, as is written in the *Book of Causes;* and they do not receive their diversities from that, for it is most simple, but from the secondary causes, or from the material upon which it descends; wherefore, in that same book, it is written, in treating of the infusion of the divine goodness: 'And make the excellences and the gifts diverse, through the co-operation of the thing that receives.' Wherefore, inasmuch as every effect retains something of the nature of its cause (as Alpetragius says, when he affirms that what is caused by a circular body has, in a certain fashion, a circular existence), every form has, in a fashion, the existence of the divine nature; not that the divine nature is divided and communicated to them; but it is participated by them, as it were in the fashion that the nature of the sun is participated in the other stars. And the more noble the form is, the more does it retain of this nature. Wherefore the human soul,

which is the noblest form of those that are generated beneath the heaven, receives more of the divine nature than any other. And because it is most natural in God to will to be (for, as we read in the aforesaid book, ' the first thing is being, and before that there is nothing '), the human soul naturally wills, with her whole desire, *to be*. And because her being depends on God, and by Him is preserved, she naturally desires and wills to be united to God, in order to fortify her own being. And because it is in the excellences of nature that the cause is revealed as divine, it comes that the human soul naturally unites herself with these in spiritual fashion, the more swiftly and the more strongly in proportion as they appear more perfect. And they so appear according as the soul's power of recognition is clear or impeded. And this union is what we call love, through which the inner quality of the soul may be recognised by beholding outwardly the things which she loves." [1]

It was obviously from the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* of Boëthius that Dante conceived the idea of representing Philosophy as a " lady full of all sweetness, adorned with virtue, wonderful in knowledge, glorious in liberty." [2] But he has completely transformed the conception, in harmony with the new Italian love-poetry, the poetry of the *dolce stil nuovo*. The stately lady that consoles the Roman senator,

[1] *Conv.* iii. 2, 18-70. Cf. *De Causis*, ed. O. Bardenhewer, §§ 4, 5, 19.
[2] *Conv.* ii. 16, 20-25.

" a woman of a countenance exceedingly venerable," who " plainly seemed not of our age and time," [1] becomes the *pargoletta bella e nuova*, " the maiden beautiful and rare," of the Italian poet's lyrics, who is to be sought by her votaries with the passion, and wooed in the language, of the lover who adores an earthly mistress. The whole Boëthian conception of philosophy, thus embued with fresh poetry in the allegorical lady of the *Convivio*, becomes transfigured in the glorified Beatrice, the symbol of the wisdom divinely revealed to man, in the *Divina Commedia*.[2]

The theory, first enunciated by the father of nineteenth-century Dante scholarship, Karl Witte, that the *Convivio* represents a period of doubt and revolt in Dante's spiritual development, and that the love of philosophical speculation, which inspires that book, is the deviation from the memory of Beatrice for which he endures her rebuke in the Earthly Paradise, is now generally and rightly rejected. But it is nevertheless true that the poet's standpoint in the *Convivio* is one that he abandons in the *Divina Commedia:* incidentally, with regard to certain minor scientific points; essentially, as to the primary significance of certain of his love-poems, addressed to women other than Beatrice, over which, moved by *timore d'infamia*,[3]

[1] *De Cons. Phil.*, I. pros. i.

[2] For the influence of Boëthius on Dante, cf. Moore, *Studies in Dante*, i. pp. 282-288; R. Murari, *Dante e Boezio* (Bologna, 1905); Wicksteed, T. C. ed. of the *Paradiso*, note on *Par.* x. 124-129.

[3] *Conv.* i. 2, 114-120.

he had attempted to throw an allegorical veil—the veil which he himself tears asunder in his full confession at the feet of Beatrice in the *Purgatorio*.

The situation depicted in the first canzone of the *Convivio*, *Voi che intendendo il terzo ciel movete*, "Ye who by understanding move the third heaven," in which Dante describes the conflict in his mind between his new love and the memory of Beatrice, is precisely similar to that of the sonnet in the *Vita Nuova*, *Gentil pensero che parla di vui*, "A gentle thought that speaks of you." But the accompanying prose explanations are, to a considerable extent, inconsistent. We are led to the inference that a canzone, originally referring to a living woman, is being transformed into an allegory of his impassioned devotion to philosophy, the mystical lady of a somewhat later stage in his thought.[1] And this seems, as it were, admitted in the eighth canto of the *Paradiso*. No sooner has Dante entered the sphere of Venus than the souls of the lovers, headed by Carlo Martello, hail him as one of themselves by reminding him of this very poem:—

> "Noi ci volgiam coi principi celesti,
> D'un giro, e d'un girare, e d'una sete,
> Ai quali tu del mondo già dicesti:
> *Voi che intendendo il terzo ciel movete.*" [2]

[1] *V. N.* § 39 and son. xxii.; *Conv.* ii. 7, 1-22, and canz. i. Cf. Wicksteed, *Essays on Dante by Dr. Karl Witte*, appendix iii.

[2] "We are turning with the celestial Princes, in one circle, and in one circling, and in one thirst, to whom thou from the world didst once say: *Ye who by understanding move the third heaven.*"—*Par.* viii. 34-37.

These are the earthly lovers, who have repented in time and been purified, but who still appear within the sphere to which the earth's shadow extends; and the love which the "star" of Venus induced in them, while they yet lived, was not the philosophical devotion expounded in the *Convivio*. Dante is, as it were, joining in the confession that Cunizza and Folco utter in the same heaven, and making himself one with those whom "the light of this star overcame." But since, like them, he has drunken of both Lethe and Eunoë, these things are no longer (as in the *Purgatorio*) remembered as a cause of shame and sorrow, or as anything personal to themselves, but as a source of gratitude for deliverance.[1]

This, however, cannot apply to the second canzone of the *Convivio—Amor che nella mente mi ragiona*, "Love that in my mind discourses to me"—which Casella is "wooed to sing" on the shores of Purgatory:—

> "Ed io: 'Se nuova legge non ti toglie
> Memoria o uso all'amoroso canto,
> Che mi solea quetar tutte mie voglie,
> Di ciò ti piaccia consolare alquanto
> L'anima mia, che, con la sua persona
> Venendo qui, è affannata tanto.'
> '*Amor che nella mente mi ragiona*,'
> Cominciò egli allor sì dolcemente,
> Che la dolcezza ancor dentro mi suona."[2]

[1] *Par.* ix. 31-36, 94-108.

[2] "And I: 'If no new law takes from thee the memory or the practice of that song of love, that was wont to calm all my desires,

"May it please thee therewith to comfort somewhat my soul, that, coming hither with her body, is so much wearied.'

"'*Love, that in my mind discourses to me*,' he then began so sweetly, that the sweetness still within me sounds."—*Purg.* ii. 106-114.

In this canzone we have the most perfect lyrical expression of the mysticism of the *Convivio*. Love speaks to the poet in his mind desirously of his lady, sweetly uttering to his soul things ineffable, beyond the comprehension of human intellect, outside the expression of finite speech. She is the destroyer of vices, the support of faith; giving a foretaste of Paradise in her eyes and on her lips; she is the exemplar of beauty and of humility, the reflection of the Divine Idea. It is, primarily and throughout, an allegory of philosophy, a hymn to wisdom, the supreme utterance of that impassioned devotion, in which love is identified with that study which is " the application of the enamoured mind to that thing of which it is enamoured." [1]

But nevertheless, from the standpoint of the *Divina Commedia*, Dante does not altogether justify the song, and even his guide, that *dignitosa coscienza e netta*, seems assailed by self-reproach for tarrying to listen to it:—

" Lo mio maestro, ed io, e quella gente
Ch'eran con lui, parevan sì contenti
Come a nessun toccasse altro la mente.
Noi eravam tutti fissi ed attenti
Alle sue note; ed ecco il veglio onesto,
Gridando: 'Che è ciò, spiriti lenti?
Qual negligenza, quale stare è questo?
Correte al monte a spogliarvi lo scoglio,
Ch'esser non lascia a voi Dio manifesto.' " [2]

[1] *Conv.* ii. 16, 80-84.

[2] " My master, and I, and that band that was with him, seemed so content as though ought else touched not the mind of any.

" We were all motionless and intent upon his notes; and, lo, the austere old man, crying: 'What is this, laggard spirits?

" What negligence, what lingering is this? Run to the mountain

Thus, the "song of love, that was wont to calm all my desires," has become, if not a hindrance, at least a cause of delay in the mystical road by which the soul attains to the vision of God. And this appears Dante's own confession. The apparent mysticism of the *Convivio*, this philosophical love, that seems so very near to his love for the glorified Beatrice, was not, after all, the true mysticism. It was wont to calm all his desires, but was not based upon a true religious experience, but upon an intellectual process; and, perhaps above all, it had offered an apparent way out of the past, a means of arriving at his goal, which ignored, or at least relegated to a secondary place, the purification of the soul, and which strove for illumination and union before the essential and primary stage of purgation had been fully traversed.

The key-note of love had been struck at the very outset of the *Purgatorio*, in the aspect of the planet Venus, *lo bel pianeta che ad amar conforta*, "the fair planet which incites to love,"[1] which had been hidden from the poet's eyes during the passage through Hell. But this love must be rightly ordered, the soul must be purified by the purgatorial pains from disordered love, in order to attain her goal.

The Franciscan poet, in an ecstasy of love, breaks out into song:—

to strip you of the slough, that lets not God be manifest unto you.' "—*Purg.* ii. 115-123.

[1] *Purg.* i. 19.

" Amor de caritate,
Perchè m'ài sì ferito?
Lo cor tutt'ò partito,
Et arde per amore." [1]

But Christ admonishes the soul concerning this love, showing her how, first of all, it must be set in order:—

" Ordena questo amore, tu che m'ami.
Non è virtute senza ordene trovata,
Poichè trovare tanto tu m'abrami,
Cha mente con virtute è renovata,
A me amare, voglio che tu chiami
La caritate qual sia ordenata;
Arbore sì è provata
Per l'ordene del fructo,
El qual demostra tutto
De omne cosa el valore.

" Tutte le cose qual aggio ordenate,
Sì so facte con numero et mesura,
Et al lor fine son tutte ordenate,
Conservanse per orden tal valura,
Et molto più ancora caritate
Sì è ordenata nella sua natura.
Donqua co per calura,
Alma, tu sè empazita?
For d'orden tu sè uscita;
Non t'è freno el fervore?" [2]

[1] *Laude di frate Jacopone da Todi*, lxxxx.: " Love for love's sake, why hast thou so wounded me? I have my heart cleft in twain, and it is burning with love." This *lauda* is attributed by St. Bernardino of Siena to St. Francis himself, and though, as it stands, it is undoubtedly the work of Jacopone, it is tempting to adopt Ozanam's suggestion that the latter was starting from, or working up into literary form, some genuine poetic utterance of the Seraphic Father of Assisi.

[2] " Set this love in order, thou that lovest Me. There is no virtue without order found; since thou desirest so to find Me, and the mind is renewed with virtue, I would have thee, to love Me, summon the

This setting love in order, as both Dante and Frate Jacopone had learned from St. Augustine, is the norm of the spiritual life, and therefore the ethical basis of the whole *Purgatorio*.[1]

Love is not the idealisation of one special passion, but the universal and innate force or tendency that impels every creature to pursue the inmost trend of its being, to the goal divinely ordained; the cause for which every agent does its every action.[2] In rational or intellectual beings, this natural inclination becomes conscious desire:—

> "Ciascun confusamente un bene apprende,
> Nel qual si queti l'animo, e disira;
> Per che di giugner lui ciascun contende."[3]

"Tell me, my soul," asks Hugh of St. Victor, "what is it that thou lovest above all things? I know that thy life is love, and I know that without love thou canst not exist."[4] "I was created in love," says the soul in the book of Mechthild of Magdeburg,

charity that is in order. A tree is proved by the order of the fruit, which shows of every thing the entire worth.

"All things that I have ordained are made with number and measure, and all are ordained to their end; they preserve such worth through order; and much more still is charity of its very nature orderly. How, then, through heat, soul, hast thou waxed mad? Out of order hast thou gone; is not the fervour's self thy bridle?"—*Lauda* lxxxx. 147-162.

[1] See below, chapter ii., pp. 54-57.

[2] Cf. *Summa Theologica*, I. ii., q. 28, a. 6, and see below, chapter iii.

[3] "Each one vaguely apprehends a good in which the mind may be at rest, and desires it; wherefore to attain unto it each doth strive."—*Purg.* xvii. 127-129.

[4] *Soliloquium de arrha animae, ad init.*

" therefore nothing can console or liberate my nobleness, save love alone." [1] And the understanding, then awakened, proposes an object supremely worthy of the soul's love. Thus St. Catherine of Siena: " The soul cannot live without love, but must always love something, because she was created through love. Affection moves the understanding, as it were saying: I want to love, for the food wherewith I am fed is love. Then the understanding, feeling itself awakened by affection, mounts up, as though it said: If thou wouldst love, I will give thee what thou canst love." [2]

Love is the net whereby the Creator draws back to Himself the creatures that He has made; in rational creatures, it is this spiritual motion of the soul that inclines her to what she apprehends as good and beautiful. Reason and revelation, the Metaphysics of Aristotle and the words of Holy Writ, point the understanding to the supreme object, the Alpha and Omega, of this love: " the Essence, in which is such supreme excellence, that all good that exists outside of it, is nought save a light of its own ray." [3] But with this love all other loves must first be harmonised, and for this the highest prerogative of the soul, freedom of the will, must be brought into play:—

[1] *Lux Divinitatis*, i. 16.

[2] *Dialogo*, cap. li.

[3] *Par.* xxvi. 25-36. With Dante's reference to Aristotle, as he who makes this truth plain to the intellect by demonstrating *il primo amore di tutte le sustanzie sempiterne* (*Par.* xxvi. 37-39), cf. Aquinas in his commentary on the *Metaphysics*, lib. xii. lectio 6 and lectio 7 (*Opera, ed. cit.*, tom. xx. pp. 633-638).

" L'animo, ch'è creato ad amar presto,
Ad ogni cosa è mobile che piace,
Tosto che dal piacere in atto è desto.
Vostra apprensiva da esser verace
Tragge intenzione, e dentro a voi la spiega,
Sì che l'animo ad essa volger face.
E se, rivolto, in vêr di lei si piega,
Quel piegare è amor, quello è natura
Che per piacer di nuovo in voi si lega.
Poi come il foco movesi in altura,
Per la sua forma, ch'è nata a salire
Là dove più in sua materia dura;
Così l'animo preso entra in disire,
Ch'è moto spiritale, e mai non posa
Fin che la cosa amata il fa gioire." [1]

Now the matter of love, the soul's natural tendency to the good and beautiful, by which *amore è di fuori a noi offerto*, " love is offered to us from without," is ever good; but not every form which is then put upon it. This *affetto de' primi appetibili*, this inclination to the various forms in which the supreme object of desire seems to be presented, is in us " even as the instinct in the bee to make honey ": a *prima voglia*, or first impulse, which admits no desert of praise or

[1] " The mind, which is created prone to love, moves swiftly to every thing that pleases, as soon as by pleasure it is aroused into activity.

" Your apprehensive faculty from a real object draws an image, and displays it within you, so that it makes the mind turn to it.

" And if, when turned, it inclines towards it, that inclination is love, that is nature, which through pleasure is bound in you anew.

" Then, even as fire moves upward because of its form, which is made for ascending where it endures longest in its matter;

" So the enamoured mind enters into desire, which is a spiritual motion, and never rests until the thing beloved makes it rejoice."—*Purg.* xviii. 19-33.

blame. In order that every other impulse or love may be harmonised with this inclination to the Supreme Good, innate in us is reason, "the faculty which giveth counsel, and which should hold the threshold of assent." This principle of innate liberty, *esta innata libertate*, for gathering in or winnowing out good and evil loves, is Free Will—the basis of the poet's whole system of ethics. *La nobile virtù Beatrice intende per lo libero arbitrio*, "this noble faculty Beatrice means by free will": the association of love with free will, thus enunciated, gaining fresh significance and fuller elucidation in the light of revelation.[1]

The main allegory of the *Purgatorio* is thus the purification of the soul from disordered love, the harmonising of all loves with the one supreme love, in this life (*in statu viae*); whereby the soul, in the imagery of Hugh of St. Victor, passes from Babylon to Jerusalem, or, in that of Hugh's pupil Richard, ascends the mountain of self-knowledge.[2] Under this aspect, the Earthly Paradise may be taken as representing the good conscience of such a soul, which has attained to knowledge of self, has purged out vices and harmonised her loves, and thus regained moral freedom. *Libertà va cercando*, is the mystical password at the outset: *Io te sopra te corono e mitrio*, is the final word of reason to the soul when the

[1] *Purg.* xviii. 34-75; *Par.* v. 19-24.
[2] Cf. below, chapter v.

purgatorial process is completed.[1] St. Bernard writes that such a soul finds the Earthly Paradise, the Garden of Delights planted by the Lord, within herself. The faithful soul has a paradise of her own, not earthly but spiritual: "In this the soul delighteth, as containing all riches. Out of this paradise goes the river parted into four heads, which are truth, charity, virtue, and wisdom."[2]

Love, thus harmonised and purified and rightly ordered, becomes in the *Paradiso*, through successive stages of illumination in the moving spheres, the instrument of the divine union and the fruition of the ultimate reality, in the Empyrean Heaven. Further, Dante's rendering of the third heaven, the sphere of Venus, shows how he regarded all love, earthly as well as divine, as each in its degree the working of one same mystical power. At the outset, the note of earthly love, *il folle amore*, is struck; but, immediately after, the poet tells us that these divine lights, the swiftly moving spirits of the purified lovers, have come down to meet him: *lasciando il giro pria cominciato in gli alti Serafini*, "leaving the circling first begun among the lofty Seraphim."[3] The Seraphim are the angelic order that especially represent the Divine Love; they subsist by their fire of love; they are named from excess of love. And

[1] *Purg.* i. 71, xxvii. 142.

[2] *Sermo de Conversione ad Clericos*, xii.-xiii.; *Sermones de diversis*, cxvii. (*De quatuor spiritualibus fontibus quatuor animae morbis medentibus*).

[3] *Par.* viii. 1-12, 16-27.

they rule and move the ninth heaven, the sphere of first movement which carries all the rest of the universe round with its power, the sphere in which all nature has its beginning. Thus the whole motion of the universe is conceived as one cosmic dance of love, beginning in that highest angelic order, *che più ama e che più sape*, " that loves most and that knows most," [1] and continued through all nature. And, at the consummation of his vision, Dante will behold, by penetrative intuition into the Divine Light, how it is that Love thus binds the universe into one, to make it resemble the supreme Unity:—

" Nel suo profondo vidi che s'interna,
Legato con amore in un volume,
Ciò che per l'universo si squaderna." [2]

III

Love is thus the guide of mysticism from the start to the goal, and love is its beginning and its end. Love leads the mystics, in their search for absolute truth and absolute beauty, to a state in which for a moment—or, as we may say with the Victorines, for that half hour during which there is silence in Heaven —the soul is permeated with the Divine. We might define Mysticism as the love-illumined quest of the

[1] *Par.* xxviii. 70-72.

[2] *Par.* xxxiii. 85-87. " Within its depths I saw contained, bound by love into one volume, what is dispersed in leaves throughout the universe."

soul to unite herself with the suprasensible—with the absolute—with that which is. Certain pantheistic mystics find the goal of this quest in the union of the soul of man with the spirit of love and beauty which they recognise in nature, as expressed by Wordsworth in those splendid lines at the end of the *Recluse*,[1] and by Shelley in the whole allegory of *Prometheus Unbound*. The mediaeval mystic, and his Catholic successors, find it in God, the First Cause — a goal only to be attained, perfectly and continuously, in the hereafter — but realised, partially and fleetingly, by anticipation here and now. And this realisation takes two principal forms. One is the religious experience, described by St. Catherine of Siena, the beata Osanna of Mantua, St. Theresa, and others, known as the spiritual espousals of the soul with Christ. The other is an intellectual anticipation of the vision of the Divine Essence, as in that *momentum intelligentiae*, that one " moment of understanding," after which St. Augustine and St. Monica sighed:[2] the one moment which should anticipate the Beatific Vision.

Dante, at the beginning of the *Vita Nuova*, speaks of his soul as espoused unto Love: *l' anima mia la quale fu sì tosto a lui disposata*.[3] But this image of the spiritual espousals does not play any notable

[1] The forty-six lines beginning " Urania, I shall need Thy guidance " —perhaps the noblest passage of blank verse in the English language.

[2] *Conf.* ix. 10. See below, chapter ii., pp. 47, 48.

[3] *V. N.* § 2. " My soul which was so early wedded unto him."

part in his mysticism; though it occurs again occasionally, as in the third canzone of the *Convivio*, where he speaks of the soul whom true nobleness adorns as being wedded again to God, *a Dio si rimarita*, in the fourth stage of life.[1] The goal of Dante's mysticism corresponds rather, as the last canto of the *Paradiso* shows, with that "moment of understanding" of which St. Augustine speaks. But the difference is more apparent than real; for these are, after all, merely two alternative ways of expressing, in the language of the intellect and of the heart respectively, an anticipatory experience of Eternity.[2] And, by Eternity, the mystic does not mean endless time, nor, primarily, everlasting life; but Eternity as defined by Boëthius, as *the complete and perfect possession of unlimited life at a single moment;*[3] a coming to that eternal *now*, of which Dante speaks, in which *s' appunta ogni ubi ed ogni quando*, "every *where* and every *when* is brought to a point."[4] It may be said that all the revelations of the great mystics are attempts, in very varying and more or less fragmentary forms, to express this experience

[1] *Le dolci rime d'amor*, canz. iii. 136-139. Cf. *Purg.* xxiii. 81, where a good death is described as the hour *del buon dolor ch'a Dio ne rimarita.*

[2] The same mystic sometimes expresses this now under one, now under the other form; thus, St. Bernard depicts the mystical espousals in his *Sermones in Cantica Canticorum*, and the intellectual anticipation of the beatific vision of God in the *De Consideratione.* And it is so with both Hugh and Richard of St. Victor.

[3] *Aeternitas igitur est interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio* (*De Consolatione Philosophiae*, V. pros. vi.). Cf. Wicksteed, *The Religion of Time and the Religion of Eternity*, pp. 23-25, appendix H.

[4] *Par.* xxix. 12.

in finite speech and figurative language. And the closing canto of the *Paradiso*, up to which the whole of the *Divina Commedia* leads, is the supreme attempt to give utterance to this in poetry.

There are many to whom the title of mystic is given, who have not seen Eternity with their own spiritual eyes, nor heard with their own spiritual ears what the trumpet says from its battlements. At the beginning of his *De praeparatione animi ad Contemplationem*, or *Benjamin minor* (Benjamin being for him the type of mystical contemplation), Richard of St. Victor says: "Many know who this Benjamin is, some by science, others by experience."[1] We have here the distinction between mysticism as an experience and mysticism as a science: between the experiential or subjective mysticism, which claims personal union (visionary or otherwise) with the supra-sensible; and the doctrinal or objective mysticism, which studies the revelations and experiences received or claimed by others, and deals with them from the standpoint of theology, psychology, or poetry.[2] The supreme type of the first class of mystic is St. Francis of Assisi: "The blessed Francis," writes Dante's

[1] *Benjamin minor*, cap. i. Cf. *Benjamin major*, iv. 23.

[2] Cf. Ribet, *La Mystique Divine*, i. pp. 14-16. Miss Evelyn Underhill, on the other hand, urges that there is no such thing as a theoretical mystic. Christian Platonists and mystical philosophers "are no more mystics than the milestones on the Dover Road are travellers to Calais." Mysticism is not a theory, but an entirely spiritual activity, of which the "business and method" is Love; actual personal experience of the embraces of the Divine Lover, not simply the belief in their reality, makes the true mystic (*Mysticism*, pp. 98, 101).

biographer, Leonardo Bruni, " not through science, nor through discipline of the schools, but by mental possession and ecstasy, applied his mind so strongly to God that he was, as it were, transfigured beyond the measure of human sense, and knew more of God than the theologians know through their study or through letters." [1] If we are to take him at his own estimation, a typical representative of the second class would be Richard of St. Victor, of whom Dante declares that he was superhuman in contemplation, but who, in his own writings, seems at times to wish to convey the impression that he has not himself had the ineffable experiences with which he deals with such insight. There are others again, like St. Bernard and St. Theresa, who seem to belong to both classes, and who write in a doctrinal and objective manner of the journeyings into suprasensible regions which have been their own. A modern Quaker writer, Miss Caroline Stephen, while taking a more simple view of a mystic as " either one who has, or one who believes in, a certain illumination from within," draws an analogous distinction between mysticism as a gift and mysticism as a belief, and adds that the *gift* of the mystic is akin to the gift of poetry.[2]

Now there is, perhaps, nothing in the *Divina Commedia* itself to compel us to regard it as anything more than a sublime fiction, the greatest of great

[1] *Vita di Dante*, ed. Solerti, p. 107.
[2] *Light Arising* (London, 1908), pp. 1-6.

poems, or to make it necessary to suppose that Dante himself was the recipient of any direct visionary experience. He is, after all, treading in the footsteps of Vergil, and it might even be argued that the vision differs in degree, rather than in kind, from such works as the so-called Vision of Tundal or the Vision of the monk Edmund of Eynsham. Taken as they stand, even the solemn opening of the *Paradiso* with its awful claim to have been in the heaven that receives most of the divine light, and to have seen things " which whoso descendeth from on high hath neither knowledge nor power to relate," even the closing canto with its apparent ecstasy in the actualisation of all capacity of spiritual sight in the volume that Love has bound, might be no more than a necessary part of the same sublime fiction, carrying conviction with them simply through the triumph of the poet's art. But, elsewhere, we find Dante claiming more than this for the *Divina Commedia ;* we find him unmistakably laying claim to some sort of direct personal mystical experience, to rank among those to whom some special revelation of the divine has been vouchsafed; as one who, while still bound round with the fetters of time, has touched more than the outskirts of eternity.

I refer, of course, to the famous passage at the close of the Letter to Can Grande, where, after citing examples from the Scriptures, and appealing to the authority of certain great mystics to justify the possi-

bility of so sublime a vision, Dante suddenly breaks out into that passionate plea lest his own unworthiness should prevent his message being accepted of men—a passage in which the personal note rings out as clearly as in the like words addressed to Vergil at the outset of his spiritual pilgrimage,[1] or in the more explicit confession to Beatrice on the banks of Lethe. It may, perhaps, be granted more easily to a man to lay claim to an exalted vision when he is writing poetry; to do so in bald prose is another matter; and it is, I think, some sense of this that makes the poet speak of himself in the third person, as though he were interpreting the work of another. He is evidently imitating the Apostle's impersonal way of referring to his own mystical experiences in the second Epistle to the Corinthians, ascribing them to the man he knew, who was *caught up to the third heaven*, who *was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*

This section of the Letter is of primary importance to the student of the mystical side of the *Divina Commedia*, alike for the question of personal experience and for that of the literary sources of the poet's mysticism:—

"And after he has said that he was in that place of Paradise, he goes on, by circumlocution, to say that he *saw certain things which he who thence descends*

[1] *Me degno a ciò nè io nè altri 'l crede* (*Inf.* ii. 33).

cannot relate; and he tells the reason, saying that *the intellect plunges in so deeply into the very thing which it desires*, which is God, *that memory cannot follow* (*Par.* i. 4-9). To understand which things we must know that the human intellect, when it is exalted in this life, because of its being co-natural and having affinity with a separated intellectual substance, is so far exalted that after its return memory fails, because it has transcended the measure of humanity. And this is conveyed to us by the Apostle, speaking to the Corinthians, where he says: *I know such a man (whether in the body, or out of the body, I know not, God knoweth), that he was caught up into paradise, and heard secret words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter* (2 Cor. xii. 3, 4). Lo, after the intellect had passed beyond human measure in its ascent, it remembered not the things that took place outside its own range. This also is conveyed to us in Matthew, where the three disciples fell upon their faces, and related nothing afterwards, as though they had forgotten (Matt. xvii. 6). And in Ezekiel it is written: *I saw, and fell upon my face* (Ezek. i. 28). And if these suffice not the invidious, let them read Richard of St. Victor in his book *De Contemplatione*, let them read Bernard in his book *De Consideratione*, let them read Augustine in his book *De Quantitate Animae*, and they will not grudge assent. But if they carp at the assignment of so great exaltation, because of the sin of the speaker, let them read

Daniel, where they will find that Nabuchodonosor, too, by divine inspiration saw certain things against sinners, and dropped them into oblivion (Dan. ii. 1, 5); for He who *maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust* (Matt. v. 45), sometimes in mercy, for their conversion, sometimes in wrath, for their punishment, reveals his glory, in greater or less measure, as He wills, to those who live never so evilly." [1]

Now I take it that, in the main, the visionary experience upon which the whole sacred poem is based was simply a sudden realisation of the hideousness of vice and the beauty of virtue, the universality and omnipotence of love, so intense and overwhelming that it came upon Dante with all the force of a special and personal revelation. But this passage in the Letter clearly implies that, for the crowning vision or ecstasy of the *Paradiso*, he is claiming something more than such a mere realisation however intense; that he is claiming some ineffable spiritual experience of which he feels himself unworthy, and which he is utterly unable adequately to relate. These are manifestly the words of one who believed that he himself had experienced one of those contacts with the Divine that are attributed to the great saints and mystics of all creeds.[2]

This experience or revelation, call it what you will, was undoubtedly the supreme event of Dante's inner

[1] *Epist.* x. 28. [2] Cf. Tyrrell, *op. cit.*, pp. 267-269.

life. It is not possible to assign it to any definite year. We remember Rossetti's stanza:—

> "Follow his feet's appointed way;—
> But little light we find that clears
> The darkness of the exiled years.
> Follow his spirit's journey: nay,
> What fires are blent, what winds are blown
> On paths his feet may tread alone?" [1]

It is usually held that the *Divina Commedia* includes, among its many meanings, that of the poet's own moral conversion, relegated in accordance with his poetic fiction to the year of jubilee, 1300, but in reality effected at a later epoch. Many scholars consider that, not only the whole poem, but the final travail of soul that gave it birth, should be assigned to the period in Dante's life that followed the disastrous enterprise of Henry of Luxemburg and that emperor's death, in 1313, which shattered all the poet's earthly hopes. The more recent tendency, especially in Italy, is to assign an earlier date, not only to the beginning of the poem, but to the actual composition of much of the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*. I am not here concerned with the question.[2] In any case, it seems certain that the *Paradiso* belongs to the latest years of Dante's life, and that it was completed between 1318 and the poet's death. We need not, I think, identify the experience referred to

[1] *Dante at Verona.*

[2] Cf. especially E. G. Parodi, in *Bullett. della Società Dantesca Italiana*, N.S., xv.

in the Letter to Can Grande (which was written about 1319) with the poet's conversion, after which he must surely have journeyed much on the ways of purgation and illumination before such a revelation could have been his. It would seemingly have been some absorbing subjective experience of the divine, completing and crowning what had gone before; some momentary flash of spiritual intuition, in which his mind *fu percossa da un fulgore, in che sua voglia venne*, "was smitten by a flash, in which its will was fulfilled";[1] in which time and space were annihilated, and the apprehension of the suprasensible, the divine and the eternal, was all in all. The tradition of Dante having sought refuge at Santa Croce di Fonte Avellana, associated with the lines describing that convent among the Apennines in the very canto of the *Paradiso* that precedes his passage up the celestial ladder of contemplation,[2] might tempt us to suggest that austere retreat as the external setting, so to speak, of such an experience; but whether there, or, later, in the music of the pine-forest, or among the mosaic-decked temples of a more primitive Christianity at Ravenna, is merely conjectural and of very minor importance.

We have, however, to reconcile this claim to direct contact with the suprasensible, this professed experience of eternity, with the obvious fact that Dante's rendering of it, or rather of the preparation

[1] *Par.* xxxiii. 140, 141. [2] *Par.* xxi. 106-111.

for it, in the poem, is in the terms of an antiquated conception of the material universe and of what we may believe to lie beyond it. And for this we need not have recourse to what Ruskin so finely says, about the difficulty of having "nobility enough in one's own thoughts to forgive the failure of any other human soul to speak clearly what it has felt of the most divine." St. Catherine of Siena, speaking of her own visions, says: "To explain in our defective language what I saw, would seem to me like blaspheming the Lord, or dishonouring Him by my speech; so great is the distance between what the intellect, when rapt and illumined and strengthened by God, apprehends, and what can be expressed by words, that they seem almost contradictory."[1] When the mystic, whether saint or poet, has some high vision of the unseen, he can only communicate what he has seen or felt to his fellow-men by making use of symbolism and imagery: that is, he is compelled to give expression to what he has conceived or experienced of the eternal in the figurative language of a day. Thus Dante himself:—

"Così parlar conviensi al vostro ingegno,
Però che solo da sensato apprende
Ciò che fa poscia d'intelletto degno.
Per questo la Scrittura condiscende
A vostra facultate, e piedi e mano
Attribuisce a Dio, ed altro intende;

[1] *S. Catharinae Senensis Legenda*, II. § 190.

E santa Chiesa con aspetto umano
Gabriel e Michel vi rappresenta,
E l'altro che Tobia rifece sano." [1]

This is, of course, the recognised method of mediaeval theologians and mystics in dealing with the imagery of the Scriptures. Thus, St. Thomas Aquinas:—

"It befits Sacred Scripture to transmit divine and spiritual things under the similitude of corporeal things. For God provides for all according to what matches their nature; but it is natural to man to come through things of sense to things of intellect, for all our knowledge begins from sense. Fittingly, then, in Holy Scripture are spiritual things transmitted to us under the metaphors of corporeal, even as Dionysius says in the first chapter of the *Celestial Hierarchy*: 'It is impossible for the divine ray to shine upon us otherwise than invested with the variety of sacred veilings.' . . . When the Scripture speaks of the arm of God, it does not mean literally that in God there is a bodily member of this kind, but what is signified by this member, to wit, operative power." [2]

[1] "Thus is it needed to speak to your faculty, since only from what is impressed on the senses does it apprehend what it afterwards makes worthy of the intellect.

"For this the Scripture condescends to your capacity, attributing feet and hands to God, but meaning otherwise;

"And holy Church with human aspect represents to you Gabriel and Michael, and that other who made Tobias whole again."—*Par.* iv. 40-48.

[2] *Summa Theologica*, I., q. 1, a. 9, and a. 10.

Dionysius similarly speaks of divine things, and more particularly of the characteristics of the Angels, as having been handed down to us "under the variety of symbolical imagery":—

"For Theology, in an artificial fashion, has made use of sacred poetical representations in the figureless intelligences, unveiling, so to speak, our mind, and providing for it by a leading proper and natural to it, and adapting to it the mysteries of the Holy Scriptures." [1]

Upon this Albertus Magnus comments: "Having shown that it is unfitting to stop at the symbols of Holy Scripture, he shows that the Scripture makes use of these by conforming itself to us. We must not imagine that these are even as the Scripture describes them in figures. *For Theology*, that is, the word of divine things, or the Sacred Scripture, *in an artificial fashion*, that is, suitably, *has made use in the figureless intelligences*, that is, in the Angels which are without figures, *of sacred representations*, that is, of *poetical* representations. For the poet, as Alpharabius says in his *Division of Sciences*, anticipates understanding and reason by certain fictions.[2] But Holy Scripture uses such *sacredly*, that is, in order to lead through them into sacred things. It has used them, I say, *unveiling our mind*, that is,

[1] *De Caelesti Hierarchia*, ii. 1.

[2] Cf. *Opusculum de Scientiis*, cap. ii. (*Alpharabii opera omnia*, Paris, 1638, p. 10). See also Paget Toynbee, *Dante Dictionary*, art. "Alfarabio."

opening a veil by uplifting our understanding, *by a leading* into spiritual things, which is through things of sense, *proper* as regards the Angels, and *natural to it, adapting to it*, that is, to the capacity of our understanding, *the mysteries of the Holy Scriptures*, that is, leading it upwards out of sensible forms." [1]

There is likewise a striking passage in Richard of St. Victor which was certainly known to Dante. In his mystical interpretation of the thirtieth chapter of Genesis, Rachel signifies Reason, and Bilhah, her handmaid, Imagination. This handmaid bears children to Jacob, while her mistress is still barren:—

"Thus do the Divine Scriptures allude to contemplation and condescend to human weakness. For they describe invisible things through the forms of visible things, and impress the memory of them upon our minds through the beauty of some desirable semblances. It is for this that they promise us now a land flowing with milk and honey; now mention flowers, now fragrance; signify the harmony of heavenly joys now by the songs of men, now by the minstrelsy of birds. Read the Apocalypse of John, and you will find the heavenly Jerusalem copiously described as adorned with gold and silver, with pearls and all manner of precious stones. And we know, indeed, that none of all these things is there, where nevertheless nothing whatever can be lacking. For of such things nothing is there specifically, where,

[1] *B. Alberti Magni opera omnia*, ed. Borgnet, tom. xiv. p. 26.

notwithstanding, the whole is by similitude. In all these things hath Bilhah power to serve her mistress usefully, since indeed, where and when she will, she represents the memory of all these to her for her desire. For we can at once imagine these things when we choose. Never could the imagination be more useful to reason, than when it serves it in such obedience."[1]

Dante is constrained to express his dream of the Divine Beauty, his sense of the Divine Love, in a form in accordance with the conceptions of his own age. He has experienced something that is eternal, utterly unconcerned with space and time; but he can only figure it with reference to the mediaeval ideas of the universe. We remember Shelley's magnificent sentence: "The distorted notions of invisible things, which Dante and his rival Milton have idealised, are merely the mask and the mantle in which these great poets walk through eternity enveloped and disguised."[2] In another form, this applies to all mystics—to all who have been compelled to distort their vision of the infinite by the use of finite words, when they have attempted to bring down their experience of the divine and eternal to the apprehension and consciousness of their contemporaries. This is the way in which we should approach such symbolical details in the *Divina Commedia*, such allegorical introductions to the true vision, as the rhythmic dance of the souls of great

[1] *Benjamin minor*, cap. xv. [2] *A Defence of Poetry*.

teachers in the sphere of the Sun, or the apparition of the Eagle of Domination in the sphere of Jupiter. The mystic's representation, the language that he uses, must all be coloured by his previous education and mental equipment. It was so with St. Catherine of Siena. Her chief intellectual training came from the reading of the Psalms, and the daily contemplation of the paintings of the early Sienese school. She wishes, in her account of her spiritual espousals, to describe a certain wonderful and supernatural state of mind; but the result is simply a highly finished picture in the style of the epoch, in which Christ and the Blessed Virgin appear with their attendant saints, while David "plays right sweetly upon his harp."[1] In the case of Dante, the works of the Latin poets, the Aristotelian philosophy and the Ptolemaic astronomy, the writings of the earlier mystics, the subtleties of contemporary schoolmen, the actual pageantry that he saw in the squares and palaces of thirteenth-century Italy, have all had their share in the actual formulation of his recollection of a spiritual experience which was in essence utterly removed from all these transitory things.

The passage just quoted from the Letter to Can Grande indicates the three writers upon whom, apart from personal experience, Dante's mysticism is mainly based: Richard of St. Victor in his *De Contemplatione*, St. Bernard in his *De Consideratione*, and St.

[1] *S. Catharinae Senensis Legenda*, I. § 115.

Augustine in his *De Quantitate Animae*. The association together in this connection of these three mystics is not peculiar to Dante. We find it similarly in the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas, in two articles of the question *De Vita Contemplativa*, where the Angelical Doctor, like Dante, couples Richard's *De Contemplatione* with Bernard's *De Consideratione*, but, instead of the *De Quantitate Animae*, refers to two other treatises of Augustine: the *De Trinitate* and the *De Vera Religione*.[1] Dante was undoubtedly acquainted with the treatment of the contemplative life by Aquinas; but it is clear that he is not taking the authority of the three writers named merely on trust; he evidently regards them as the main sources of his mystical psychology.[2] The actual order in which he cites them, the reverse of the chronological, is that of Aquinas in the first of the two articles mentioned, and it corresponds with the order in which they appear in the sacred poem. The glowing soul of Richard appears in the sphere of the Sun; St. Bernard takes the place of Beatrice as Dante's guide in the Empyrean; St. Augustine is seen in his allotted place in the snow-white Rose of Paradise, before the final consummation of the vision and the fulfilment of the poet's desire.

[1] *Summa Theologica*, II. ii., q. 180, a. 3 and a. 4.

[2] This was first suggested by Antonio Lubin (*La Divina Commedia, Studi preparatori*, p. 219), who, however, made the curious error of not identifying the *De Contemplatione* of Richard with the *Benjamin major*.

CHAPTER II

DANTE AND ST. AUGUSTINE

I. Analogy between St. Augustine's *De Quantitate Animae* and the general allegory of the *Divina Commedia ;* the " moment of understanding " in the ninth book of the *Confessions.* II. Augustinian elements in the *Convivio* and *De Monarchia ;* echoes of St. Augustine in the first canto of the *Inferno ;* Dante's thought, especially on the mystical side, profoundly and continuously influenced throughout the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* by the *De Doctrina Christiana,* the *Confessions,* and the *De Civitate Dei.* III. The position of St. Augustine in the poet's Empyrean Heaven.

I

We have heard Dante, in that passage of the Letter to Can Grande which is his defence of the mysticism of the *Paradiso*, appeal to St. Augustine in the *De Quantitate Animae* as one of his three chief authorities for the power of the human intellect to be so exalted in this life as to transcend the measure of humanity [1] —what Plotinus called the " flight of the alone to the Alone."

The *De Quantitate Animae* is a small book in the form of a dialogue, written by St. Augustine about 388, less than two years after his conversion. In it, towards the end, he traces the seven stages in the

[1] *Epist.* x. 28.

soul's progress from mere animation, through the life of the senses, rational life " which is proper to man," virtue, tranquillity or complete trust in God, and the desire of knowing what is true in the supreme degree, to the very vision and contemplation of truth.[1] It is religion, he says, which joins the soul in the third stage, and begins to lead her; purifies her in the fourth; reforms her in the fifth; introduces her in the sixth; feeds her in the seventh: " And this it doth, at one time more swiftly, at another more slowly, according as each is capable by love and merits." [2]

These seven stages, as Antonio Lubin first pointed out,[3] can be traced in allegory throughout the *Divina Commedia*. The first, that of " animation," is represented by Dante coming to himself at the opening of the poem; the second, the life of the senses, being his wanderings. The third stage, that of rational life, where religion joins the soul, is seen where Vergil, sent by the three blessed ladies in the Court of Heaven to the poet's aid, leads Dante through the *Inferno*. The *Purgatorio* represents the fourth stage, that of " virtue," where religion purifies the soul; while the Earthly Paradise corresponds to the fifth stage, tranquillity or complete trust in God, where it reforms the soul; at the close of which Dante describes himself as " reformed, even as new

[1] *De Quantitate Animae*, cap. 33.
[2] *Ibid.*, cap. 36. Cf. *Conv.* iii. 2, 59-64. [3] *Op. cit.*, pp. 224-227.

trees renewed with new foliage, pure and disposed to ascend to the stars." [1] The correspondence of the sixth stage, the desire of knowing what is true in the supreme degree (which St. Augustine calls *ingressio*), with the passage through the nine moving spheres, is sufficiently obvious; as also is that of the seventh, the very vision and contemplation of truth, in which religion feeds the soul, with the Empyrean, where Dante's soul is fed with the vision of the Divine Essence:—

"In this vision and contemplation of truth," writes St. Augustine, "which is the seventh and last stage of the soul (and not indeed a stage, but a certain mansion to which she comes by these stages), what shall I say of the joys, of the fruition of the supreme and true Good, of the perfect peace and breath of eternity? Certain great and incomparable souls, whom we believe to have seen and to see these things, have told as much as they judged meet to be told. I now dare tell thee that, if we steadfastly keep to the course which God enjoins upon us and which we have already begun, we shall come by His power and wisdom to that Supreme Cause, the supreme Author or first Beginning of all things." [2]

This is manifestly the passage to which Dante particularly refers in the Letter, and it is clear from the context that he rightly understands St. Augustine as speaking, primarily, not of the state of the blessed

[1] *Purg.* xxxiii. 142-145. [2] *De Quantitate Animae*, cap. 33.

in another life, but of the mystical ascent of the human spirit in this. It is the same psychological situation which the great doctor depicts again, some nine years later, in the famous chapter of the ninth book of the *Confessions*, where he and St. Monica, as they leaned in a certain window which looked into the garden of the house at Ostia, spoke together of a foretaste of the Beatific Vision, sighing after *hoc momentum intelligentiae*, "this moment of understanding:—

"We were saying then: If to any the tumult of the flesh were hushed, hushed the phantasies of earth, and waters, and air; hushed, too, the heavens; and the very soul hushed unto herself, and pass beyond herself by not thinking of self; hushed all dreams and imaginary revelations, every language and every sign, and utterly hushed whatever exists only to pass away; since, if any should hear, all these are saying, *We made not ourselves, but He made us that abideth for ever;* if, having said this, they then were to be silent, having roused our ears to Him who made them, and He alone were to speak, not by them, but by Himself, that we might hear His word, not through tongue of flesh, nor through voice of Angel, nor through sound of thunder, nor in the dark riddle of a similitude, but were to hear Him whom in these we love, His very self without these; and even as we now stretch out ourselves, and, in rapid thought, touch that Eternal Wisdom that abideth over all,

if this could be continued, and other visions of kind far unlike be withdrawn, and this one catch up, and absorb, and bury its beholder amidst inward joys, so that our unending life might be such as was that moment of understanding for which we sighed: would not this be to *enter into the joy of thy Lord?*" [1]

This moment of understanding (the *un punto solo* of the last canto of the *Paradiso*), in which the vision of the Divine should " catch up and absorb and bury its beholder amidst inward joys," so that it should be the anticipation of the entry into the joy of the Lord, which is Eternal Life, is the consummation of Dante's vision in the Empyrean.[2]

II

Dante was profoundly influenced by the works of St. Augustine, whom, in the *De Monarchia*, he classes among the inspired doctors of whom he writes: " He who doubts that they were aided by the Holy Spirit, either never saw their fruits, or, if he saw them, has tasted them very little." [3] Almost at the outset of the *Convivio*, he appeals to the *Confessions*, to the example of St. Augustine in justification of a man writing about himself for the advantage of others: " for by the progress of his life, which was from bad to good, and from good to better, and from better

[1] *Conf.* ix. 10. [2] *Par.* xxxiii. 82-105. [3] *Mon.* iii. 3, 87-91.

to best, he gave us example and teaching, which could not have been received through any other such true testimony." [1]

Both the *De Monarchia* and the *Convivio* show the influence of St. Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*. Dr. Moore has noted that the two chapters in these works in which Dante extols the public spirit of the ancient Romans, their love for Rome and their self-sacrificing devotion for the common weal, are constructed throughout upon the model of the analogous chapter in Augustine.[2] The intention of the poet and that of the saint are essentially different; the one cites these heroic actions as proofs of a divinely inspired purpose in the Roman People subjecting all the world to itself; the other argues: If the Romans did and endured so much for human glory and an earthly city, how much more should Christians despise all the vanities of this world for their eternal and celestial country, and suffer, without exaltation,

[1] *Conv.* i. 2, 101-110. There are three quotations from St. Augustine in the *Convivio*, none of them sufficiently literal for certain identification: (a) *nullo è senza macola* (*Conv.* i. 4, 67-68), which Dr. Moore refers to *Conf.* i. 7; (b) a passage concerning equity and the written law (*Conv.* iv. 9, 82-86), of which the source is indicated by Dr. Boffito in Augustine's *De Libero Arbitrio*, i. 15, § 31; (c) on the acquisition of self-control (*Conv.* iv. 21, 125-133), which roughly corresponds with Augustine's *De Beata Vita*, cap. 4, § 33. Cf. E. Moore, *Studies in Dante*, i. pp. 291-294, and G. Boffito, *Dante, Sant' Agostino, ed Egidio Colonna*, pp. xii.-xix. Though the express references to Augustine's works in Dante are not very numerous, Boffito somewhat overstates the case when he says (*op. cit.*, p. xix.) that Dante does not seem to have realised the greatness of this Father of the Church.

[2] *Conv.* iv. 5, *Mon.* ii. 5, *De Civ. Dei*, v. 18; Moore, *op. cit.*, i. p. 188.

all things even to the shedding of their blood? But his conclusion hardly differs from that of Dante: "Through that Empire, so wide and so enduring, and so renowned and glorious by the virtues of such great men, to their labours the reward which they sought was given, and to us were examples set of needful admonition; that if, for the most glorious City of God, we do not preserve such virtues as they for the glory of an earthly city, we may be pierced with shame, and, if we preserve them, may not be exalted with pride. For, as the Apostle says, *the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us* (Rom. viii. 18). Of this human glory of the present time their lives were deemed sufficiently worthy. Wherefore even the Jews, who slew Christ (the New Testament revealing what was concealed in the Old, that the one true God should be worshipped, not for earthly and temporal benefits, which divine providence vouchsafes alike to the good and to the bad, but for life eternal and everlasting gifts, and the society of that supernal City), were justly surrendered to their glory; that those who sought and acquired earthly glory, by any virtues whatsoever, might conquer those who, in their wickedness, slew and rejected the Giver of true glory and of the eternal City."[1]

It was probably from St. Augustine, in the *De*

[1] *De Civitate Dei*, v. 18.

Civitate Dei, that Dante derived the conception, ascribed to Pythagoras, of the philosopher, not as the wise man, but as the lover of wisdom (*non sapiente, ma amatore di sapienza*) [1]—a conception which, coloured by the allegorical figuration of Boëthius in the *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, becomes the basis of the *Convivio*, and, translated into the language and adorned with the imagery of the love-poets of the *dolce stil nuovo*, takes lyrical form in the allegorical *Rime* in honour of the mystical lady of the poet's worship, whose body is wisdom and whose soul is love.

Again, in the *De Monarchia*, St. Augustine is cited on the two ways of going astray as to the mystical sense of the sacred Scriptures; "either by seeking for it where it is not, or by taking it otherwise than it should be taken": [2]—

"Concerning the first, Augustine says in the *City of God:* 'Not all those things, which are related as having happened, are also to be thought to signify something; but on account of those which do signify something, those also which signify nothing are added. For only with the ploughshare is the earth broken up; but, that this may be done, the other parts of the plough are also necessary.' [3] Concerning the second, he likewise says, in the *Christian Doctrine*,

[1] *Conv.* iii. 11, 22-54; Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes*, v. 3; *De Civitate Dei*, viii. 2. On this point, see especially Paget Toynbee, *Dante Studies and Researches*, pp. 92, 93; and cf. below, pp. 152-154.

[2] *Mon.* iii. 4, 45-72. [3] *De Civitate Dei*, xvi. 2.

speaking of him who would find a meaning in the Scriptures other than he who wrote them says, that 'he is so mistaken even as one who, deserting the way, comes nevertheless by a circuitous route to the place whither that road leads.' And he adds: 'It should be pointed out to him, lest, by his habit of going astray, he may be forced to go into cross roads or even in the wrong direction.'[1] Then he indicates the reason why we must beware of this in the Scriptures, saying: 'Faith will falter, if the authority of the Divine Scriptures is shaken.'[2]"

The second quotation is less accurate than is usual with Dante; but his meaning is made clearer by comparison with the whole passage as it stands in Augustine:—

"Whoever finds a meaning in the Scriptures other than that of him who wrote them, is deceived, albeit they lie not; but, nevertheless, if he is so mistaken in his interpretation as to build up charity, which is the end of the commandment,[3] he goes astray even

[1] *De Doctrina Christiana*, i. 36.

[2] *Ibid.*, i. 37. Just before, St. Augustine speaks of a man who, finding his interpretation contradicted by other passages in the Scriptures, perceives that it cannot be true, and "loving his own opinion, begins to be more angry with the Scripture than with himself." Cf. *Par.* xiii. 118-120:—

> "Perch'egl' incontra che più volte piega
> L'opinion corrente in falsa parte,
> E poi l'affetto lo intelletto lega."

[3] That is, if, by his mistaken interpretation, he finds things in the Scriptures which help to stimulate love of God and our neighbours, which *is the fulfilling of the law* (Rom. xiii. 10).

as one who, through error deserting the way, reaches all the same, by the fields, the place whither that road leads. He is, nevertheless, to be corrected, and it should be pointed out to him how much more useful it is not to leave the way, lest, by his habit of wandering, he may be forced to go into cross roads or even in the wrong direction." [1]

There is a remarkable analogy between the condition here described by St. Augustine and the position of Dante himself in the first canto of the *Inferno*, where he has abandoned the *verace via*, and nevertheless finds a *bene* in the dark wood, which was to prove to be for the building up of charity. And Vergil comes to correct and point out his error, according to Augustine's indication. The analogy is emphasised by Dante's own words that follow his quotation: "I say that, if such errors proceed from ignorance, they should be pardoned after careful rebuke, even as a man is to be pardoned *who should be scared by a lion in the clouds*"; [2] which inevitably reminds us of the poet's own fear at the sight which appeared to him of a lion:—

> "Questi parea che contra me venesse
> Con la test' alta, e con rabbiosa fame,
> Sì che parea che l'aer ne temesse." [3]

[1] *De Doctrina Christiana*, i. 36. Cf. Moore, *op. cit.*, i. p. 291, and Wicksteed, in *T. C. Latin Works of Dante*, p. 240. Dr. Moore points out that *Conv.* iv. 12 (181-200) contains a reminiscence of this passage.

[2] *Mon.* iii. 4, 72-76.

[3] "He seemed that he were coming against me, with head uplifted, and with raging hunger, so that the air appeared to be afraid of him."—*Inf.* i. 46-48.

It is, however, the *diritta via* through life, rather than through the Scriptures, that Dante had lost, and we can hardly claim this passage as the starting point of the *Divina Commedia*. There is a more striking resemblance with the imagery of the first canto of the *Inferno* at the end of the seventh book of the *Confessions*, where St. Augustine writes: "It is one thing from the wooded mountain-top to see our native-land of peace, and to find no road to it, and vainly to venture through pathless ways, while fugitive deserters besiege and lie in ambush round, with their captain, the lion and the dragon; and another to keep the road leading thither, which is guarded by the care of the celestial Emperor." [1] Here, though in another connection, we have the wood and the hill, the beasts (which Dante transforms into the three spoken of by Jeremiah, v. 6, as preparing to tear the impenitent sinner into pieces), the two ways, and even the *caelestis imperator*, who, on the lips of Vergil, becomes *quello imperador che lassù regna*.[2]

Further, the moral basis of the *Purgatorio*, its central conception of setting love in order, and the threefold division founded thereon, as also the

[1] *Conf.* vii. 21.

[2] *Inf.* i. 124. Boffito (*op. cit.*, p. xv.) holds that this passage of the *Confessions* suggested to Dante "l'impostatura o introduzione del poema." There is, I think, little to be said for the theory of Giovanni Pascoli (*Sotto il Velame*, pp. 523-544) that "la fonte prima" of the allegory of the *Divina Commedia* is Augustine's interpretation of Rachel and Leah, in *Contra Faustum*, xxii. 52-58.

spiritual law of ascent by which Dante mounts from sphere to sphere in the *Paradiso*, have all a direct Augustinian source.

St. Augustine, in the *De Civitate Dei*, defines virtue as the ordering of love, *ordo amoris* :—

" Every creature, since it is good, can be loved both well and badly: well, that is, when order is preserved; badly, when order is disturbed. If the Creator be truly loved, that is, if He Himself, not ought else instead of Him which is not He, be loved, He cannot be loved badly. For even Love itself is to be loved in orderly wise, whereby what is to be loved is loved well, that the virtue may be in us by which one lives well. Therefore it seems to me that a brief and true definition of virtue is the *Order of Love;* on account of which in the holy canticle the Bride of Christ, the City of God, sings: *Set love in order in me.*" [1]

And again, in the *De Doctrina Christiana*, he speaks of the order of love, *ordo dilectionis* :—

" He liveth justly and holily, who appraises things at their right worth; it is he who hath ordered love, so that he neither loves what is not to be loved, nor fails to love what is to be loved, nor loves too much what is to be loved less, nor loves equally what is to

[1] *De Civitate Dei*, xv. 22. In the *Song of Solomon* (ii. 4), where the English Bible reads, *And his banner over me was love*, the Vulgate has *Ordinavit in me charitatem*, " He set love in order in me." St. Augustine uses the words *amor, dilectio, charitas* as practically synonymous. Cf. *De Civitate Dei*. xiv. 7.

be loved less or more, nor loves less or more what is to be loved equally." [1]

Upon these two passages is mainly based the whole of Vergil's discourse to Dante in the seventeenth canto of the *Purgatorio* (although, as I shall presently show, the starting point is from Dionysius). Whereas *amore naturale*, the instinct or unconscious tendency to their good of irrational and inanimate creatures, is always "without error"; *amore d'animo*, the conscious love or desire of rational beings, "can err through an evil object, or through too little, or through too much vigour": [2]—

"Mentre ch'egli è ne' primi ben diretto,
E ne' secondi sè stesso misura,
Esser non può cagion di mal diletto;
Ma quando al mal si torce, o con più cura
O con men che non dèe corre nel bene,
Contra il fattore adopra sua fattura.
Quinci comprender puoi ch'esser conviene
Amor sementa in voi d'ogni virtute
E d'ogni operazion che merta pene." [3]

The whole purgatorial process becomes the purgation of the soul from disordered love, and hence the acquisition of virtue which is *ordo amoris*. The

[1] *De Doctrina Christiana*, i. 27. [2] *Purg.* xvii. 94-96.

[3] "Whilst it is directed to the primal goods, and in the secondary moderates itself, it cannot be cause of evil delight;

"But, when it is perverted to evil, or, with more care or with less than it should, runs towards the good, His creature works against the Creator.

"Hence canst thou understand that love must be the seed in you of every virtue, and of every act that merits punishment."—*Purg.* xvii. 97-105.

threefold division of the seven terraces is based upon the origin of the seven capital vices in disordered love; loving what is not to be loved (perverted love as pride, envy, and anger); loving with too little love the good that is the goal of the mind's desire (defective love as sloth); loving too much the good which is to be loved less, as being only the means for the preservation of the individual and the race (excessive love as avarice, gluttony, and lust).[1]

Again, we read in the *De Civitate Dei* :—

"Why do we not feel in ourselves the love of that love by which we love whatever good we love? Because there is another love also, by which is loved what is not to be loved;[2] and this love he hates in himself, who loves that love by which that is loved which should be loved. For both can be in one man, and this is good for man, in order that, by the increase of the love whereby we live well, the love may die out by which we live ill, until all our life is made perfectly whole and changed to good. If we were beasts, we should love carnal life and what is according to its sensuality; that would be our sufficient good, and, when we had our good according to this, we should seek nought else. Again, if we were trees, we could not, indeed, love anything with sensible motion, but would seem, as it were, to desire that whereby we were more fertile and copious in fruit.

[1] *Purg.* xvii. 106-139. For the impossibility of self-hatred, cf. *De Doctrina Christiana*, i. 24.

[2] Cf. *Purg.* xvii. 133-135.

If we were stones, or waves, or wind, or flame, or ought of that kind, without any sense or life, there would still not be lacking to us a kind of appetite for our own places and order. For the movements of the weights are as the loves of bodies, whether they tend downwards through heaviness, or upwards through lightness; and as the body by weight, so is the soul borne by love, whithersoever she is borne." [1]

Here we have the germ of Dante's mystical doctrine of the law of spiritual gravitation, that the soul is moved by love as the body is by its weight, the gravitation of the will being to what it loves. It is a favourite thought of St. Augustine, to which he gives fuller expression in the *Confessions* :—

" In Thy gift shall we rest; there shall we enjoy Thee, our rest, our place. Love lifts us up thither, and Thy good Spirit exalts our humbleness from the gates of death. In good will is our peace.[2] The body by its own weight strives towards its own place. Weight is not downward only, but to its own place. Fire tends upward, a stone downward. By their own weights are they urged, they seek their own places. Oil poured below water is lifted above the water;

[1] *De Civ. Dei*, xi. 28.

[2] *In bona voluntate, pax nobis est.* Pusey, perhaps remembering the most famous line of the *Paradiso*, renders this: " In Thy good pleasure is our peace." I take it rather as meaning, our peace is in the good will that is inflamed by God, and in harmony with the Divine will. Cf. the Vulgate version of Luke ii. 14: *Et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis.* If Augustine's sentence is the verbal inspiration of *Par.* iii. 85, it tends a little to support the now discredited reading: *In la sua volontate è nostra pace.*

water poured above oil sinks below the oil. By their own weights are they urged, they seek their own places. Out of order they are restless; they are restored to order, and they are at rest. My weight is my love; by that am I borne, whithersoever I am borne. By Thy gift we are inflamed, and are borne upward; we are kindled, and we go. We ascend by the ascents in our heart, and sing a song of degrees; by Thy fire, by Thy good fire, are we kindled, and we go; for we go upward to the peace of Jerusalem." [1]

This law of spiritual gravitation, whereby all things find their rest in order, the *forma che l'universo a Dio fa simigliante*, is the whole principle of Dante's ascent in the first canto of the *Paradiso*, in accordance with which the purified soul mounts on the wings of love up to God:—

" Nell'ordine ch'io dico sono accline
Tutte nature, per diverse sorti,
Più al principio loro e men vicine;
Onde si movono a diversi porti
Per lo gran mar dell'essere, e ciascuna
Con istinto a lei dato che la porti.
Questi ne porta il foco in vêr la luna,
Questi nei cor mortali è permotore,
Questi la terra in sè stringe ed aduna.
Nè pur le creature che son fuore
D'intelligenza quest'arco saetta,
Ma quelle c'hanno intelletto ed amore.
La provvidenza, che cotanto assetta,
Del suo lume fa il ciel sempre quieto,
Nel qual si volge quel c'ha maggior fretta.

[1] *Conf.* xiii. 9.

Ed ora lì, com'a sito decreto,
Cen porta la virtù di quella corda,
Che ciò che scocca drizza in segno lieto.

. . . . . .

" Non dèi più ammirar, se bene estimo,
Lo tuo salir, se non come d'un rivo
Se d'alto monte scende giuso ad imo.
Maraviglia sarebbe in te, se privo
D'impedimento giù ti fossi assiso,
Come a terra quiete in foco vivo." [1]

Also, in the *De Doctrina Christiana*, St. Augustine writes concerning the purification of the mind that it may see God:—

" Since that Truth is to be enjoyed, which liveth changelessly, and in it God the Trinity, the author and creator of the universe, provides for the things that He hath made; the mind must be purified, in order that it may be able to gaze into that light, and to cleave to it when it has been beheld. Which purifi-

[1] " In the order of which I speak all natures are inclined, by diverse lots, more and less near unto their Source;

" Wherefore they move to diverse ports over the great sea of being, and each with instinct given it to bear it on.

" This bears the fire up towards the moon, this is the motive power in the hearts of mortal things, this binds together and unites the earth.

" Nor only the creatures that are cut off from intelligence does this bow shoot, but those that have both intellect and love.

" The providence, that ordains all this, makes with its light the heaven ever still, within which revolves that which has the greatest speed.

" And now thither, as to a site decreed, the virtue bears us hence of that cord, which directs all that it impels to a joyous mark. . . .

" Thou shouldst not marvel more, if I deem rightly, at thine ascent, than at a river, if from a high mountain it falls downward to the base.

" Marvel were it in thee, if, freed from impediment, thou hadst settled below, even as stillness on earth in a living flame."—*Par.* i. 109-126, 136-141.

cation we deem to be, as it were, a kind of ambulation, or navigation towards our native-land." [1]

In this description of purgation as a kind of sea-voyage, *quasi navigatio ad patriam*, we are inevitably reminded of the little vessel that conveys Casella and the other spirits over the sea from Tiber's mouth to the shore of Purgatory, and of the poet's frequent recurrence to similar imagery throughout the *Purgatorio*.[2] A clearer echo of this passage is heard in the last canto of the *Paradiso*, where the poet's purified vision not only enters the Light that is the very truth, but is united to it, all powers of spiritual vision being actualised therein:—

" Chè la mia vista, venendo sincera,
E più e più entrava per lo raggio
Dell'alta luce, che da sè è vera.

. . . . .

" Io credo, per l'acume ch'io soffersi
Del vivo raggio, ch'io sarei smarrito,
Se gli occhi miei da lui fossero aversi.
E mi ricorda ch'io fui più ardito
Per questo a sostener tanto, ch'io giunsi
L'aspetto mio col valor infinito.
O abbondante grazia, ond'io presunsi
Ficcar lo viso per la luce eterna
Tanto, che la veduta vi consunsi! " [3]

[1] *De Doctrina Christiana*, i. 10 (*Ad videndum Deum purgandus animus*).

[2] *Purg.* ii. 25-42, 100-105; viii. 1-6; xii. 4-6; xvii. 76-78, 85-87. Cf. the story told by St. Gregory (*Dialogues*, iv. 35) of the man who, at the point of death, had a vision of a ship ready to convey his soul and that of his friend to Sicily. Augustine is, of course, not speaking of Purgatory, but of the purification of the soul in this life.

[3] " For my sight, becoming pure, was entering more and more through the ray of that high Light, which in itself is true. . . .

" I believe that, through the keenness that I endured of the

In the seventh book of the *Confessions*, we find that famous sentence, of such profound mystical significance: "I did not abide to enjoy my God; but I was caught up unto Thee by Thy beauty, and soon dragged from Thee by mine own weight, and sank down with sighing into these lower things. This weight was carnal custom; but with me was still the memory of Thee."[1] This *pondus*, of *consuetudo carnalis*, is that of which St. Peter speaks to Dante in the Stellar Heaven: *E tu, figliuol, che per lo mortal pondo ancor giù tornerai ;*[2] and, indeed, the whole correspondence with Dante's state of mind at the end of the poem, after *possa* has failed the *alta fantasia*,[3] is sufficiently clear. St. Augustine's words give a deeper explanation to the third part of the *Vita Nuova*, the part (so manifestly on a lower level than the rest of the book) which contains the episode of Dante's incipient love for the *pietosa donna*, the "compassionate lady" of the window. A recent student of the psychology of mysticism well writes: "Each step towards the vision of the Real brings

living ray, I should have been lost if mine eyes had turned aside from it.

"And I remember that I was the bolder, for this, to sustain so far that I united my gaze with the infinite Worth.

"O grace abundant, by which I presumed to fix my gaze through the eternal Light so far that I consumed my power of vision therein!" —*Par.* xxxiii. 52-54, 76-84.

[1] *Conf.* vii. 17.

[2] *Par.* xxvii. 64: "And thou, son, who through thy mortal weight shalt again return below."

[3] *Par.* xxxiii. 142.

with it a reaction. The nascent transcendental powers are easily fatigued, and the pendulum of self takes a shorter swing."[1] In this episode we have essentially what might be called a troubadour version of the psychological situation depicted by St. Augustine: the soul dragged down for a while from the true beauty by the weight of carnal custom. And as, with Augustine, the memory of that divine Beauty remains; so with Dante: *Maggiore desiderio era lo mio ancora di ricordarmi de la gentilissima donna mia, che di vedere costei*, "Greater desire was mine still to bethink me of my most gentle lady, than to behold this one";[2] and the remembrance finally triumphs, in the *forte imaginazione*, the "strong imagination" of Beatrice as she had first appeared to his eyes, "with those crimson raiments," the mystic hue of love, an anticipation of that "colour of living flame," in which she is to appear robed in the Earthly Paradise.[3]

Among the passages in the *Divina Commedia* which seem directly inspired by St. Augustine, is the pathetic terzina addressed by Statius to Vergil:—

> "Facesti come quei che va di notte,
> Che porta il lume retro, e sè non giova,
> Ma dopo sè fa le persone dotte."[4]

[1] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, p. 215.
[2] *V. N.* § 39. [3] *V. N.* § 40; *Purg.* xxx. 33.
[4] "Thou didst like he who goes by night, who bears the light behind, and aids not himself, but makes those wise that follow him."—*Purg.* xxii. 67-69.

As Scartazzini first pointed out, this seems suggested by a sentence in the *Confessions:* "I had my back to the light, and my face to the things that were enlightened; whereby my face itself, with which I perceived the things enlightened, was not enlightened." [1]

Again, the beautiful passage in the fourth canto of the *Paradiso*, where the poet speaks of the intellectual search for truth, the inspiring force of the difficulties that arise in this quest, closely corresponds with what St. Augustine says concerning the divine purpose in concealing the meaning of passages in the Scriptures under the veil of mystery, in order that man may be incited to investigation; more particularly, perhaps, with a sentence in the *Confessions*, where we have an image resembling that of Dante's, of the wild animal resting in its lair: "For not in vain didst Thou will the dark secrets of so many pages to be written. Have not those forests their harts, withdrawing themselves therein, and ranging and walking and feeding, lying down, and ruminating?" [2]—

> "Io veggio ben che giammai non si sazia
> Nostro intelletto, se il ver non lo illustra,
> Di fuor dal qual nessun vero si spazia.
> Posasi in esso, come fiera in lustra,
> Tosto che giunto l'ha: e giugner puollo;
> Se non, ciascun disio sarebbe *frustra*.

[1] *Conf.* iv. 16. But cf. Moore, *op. cit.*, i. p. 293; Boffito, *op. cit.*, p. xv.
[2] *Conf.* xi. 2. Cf. *De Doctrina Christiana*, ii. 6, and *De Vera Religione*, cap. 17.

Nasce per quello, a guisa di rampollo,
A piè del vero il dubbio: ed è natura,
Ch'al sommo pinge noi di collo in collo." [1]

The opening lines of Beatrice's discourse, at the beginning of the twenty-ninth canto of the *Paradiso*, have likewise a decided Augustinian colour. The conception of God's eternity, *dove s'appunta ogni ubi ed ogni quando*, "in which every *where* and every *when* is brought to a point," [2] seems to condense St. Augustine's doctrine on the subject into a single line.[3] And the philosophical account of the creation that follows, though drawing elements from Plato as well as from Dionysius and Aquinas,[4] is in accordance with the explanation of the beginning of the book of *Genesis* in the *Confessions*:—

"Non per avere a sè di bene acquisto,
Ch'esser non può, ma perchè suo splendore
Potesse, risplendendo, dir: *Subsisto*;
In sua eternità di tempo fuore,
Fuor d'ogni altro comprender, come i piacque,
S'aperse in nuovi amor l'eterno amore.
Nè prima quasi torpente si giacque;
Chè nè prima nè poscia procedette
Lo discorrer di Dio sopra quest'acque." [5]

[1] "I see well that our intellect is never sated, unless the Truth illumines it, outside of which no truth finds place.

"It rests in it, as a wild beast in its lair, as soon as it hath reached it; and it can reach it; otherwise, all desire would be in vain.

"For this springs up, in fashion of a shoot, questioning at the foot of the truth; and it is nature, which to the summit urges us from hill to hill."—*Par.* iv. 124-132. Cf. the striking passage from Abelard's *Sic et Non*, quoted below, p. 113.

[2] *Par.* xxix. 12. [3] *Conf.* xi. 10-13. [4] Cf. below, p. 107.

[5] "Not to have acquisition of good to Himself, which cannot be, but that His splendour might, as it glowed, say: *I am*;

"In His eternity, outside of time, outside of every other limit,

"Of the fulness of Thy goodness," writes St. Augustine, "doth Thy creature subsist, that a good, which could profit Thee nothing, nor because of Thee was equal to Thee, might nevertheless, since it could be made out of Thee, not lack being." [1] "But what Thou didst say in the beginning of creation: *Let there be light, and there was light;* not unfittingly do I understand of the spiritual creature; for there was already a kind of life for Thee to illumine, but as it did not deserve of Thee that it should be such a life which could be illumined, so neither, when it now was such, did it deserve of Thee that it should be illumined. For neither might its formless state please Thee, unless it became light; not by existing, but by beholding the illuminating light and by cleaving to it; so that it owed to nought, save to Thy grace, that it liveth and that it liveth blessedly." [2] "Thou, who alone art eternal, didst not begin to work after innumerable spaces of times; for all spaces of times, both those which have passed and those which shall pass, neither depart nor come, unless through Thee working and abiding." [3] "But if any one's flying imagination wander through the images of past times, and wonder that Thou, God almighty and creating all and all-sustaining, the artificer of heaven and

as pleased Him, the eternal Love unfolded Himself in new loves.

"Nor before did He lie as if inactive; for neither before nor after did proceed the moving of God upon these waters."—*Par.* xxix. 13-21.

[1] *Conf.* xiii. 2. [2] *Conf.* xiii. 3. [3] *Conf.* vii. 15.

earth, didst abstain from so great a work, before Thou madest it, for innumerable ages; let him awake and take heed; for he wonders at a delusion. For whence could innumerable ages have passed by, which Thou didst not make, since Thou art the author and creator of all ages? Or what times should there have been, which were not created by Thee? And how might they pass by, if they had never been? Since, therefore, Thou art the worker of all times, if there was any time before Thou madest heaven and earth, why is it said that Thou didst abstain from working? For that very time hadst Thou made; nor could times have passed by, before Thou madest time. But if, before heaven and earth, there was no time, why is it asked what then Thou didst? For there was no *then*, when time was not; nor dost Thou in time precede time: otherwise, Thou wouldst not precede all times. But Thou precedest all times past, by the loftiness of an ever present eternity, and surpassest all future times, because they are future, and, when they come, they will be past; *but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail* (Hebr. i. 12). Thy years neither go nor come; but these of ours both go and come, that all may come. Thy years all stand together, for they abide; nor are those that go excluded by those that come, for they pass not away; but these of ours shall all be, when they shall all be no more. Thy years are one day; and Thy day is not daily, but to-day, for Thy to-day yields not to

to-morrow, nor succeeds to yesterday. Thy to-day is eternity; therefore didst Thou beget the Co-eternal, to whom Thou saidst: *This day have I begotten Thee* (Ps. ii. 7). All times didst Thou make, and before all times Thou art, nor in any time was not time." [1]

And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters (Gen. i. 2). For St. Augustine, as for Dante, these waters signify the formless matter, in which "there was nothing, neither colour, nor figure, nor body, nor spirit"; [2] the *materia prima*, when *the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep*, over which the Spirit of God moved, "as the will of the artificer moves over the wood or other thing subjected to his operation," to bring all things into being, to turn to Him from whom they then had their degree of life, and to have that life rendered beautiful in His light.[3]

It is with an argument from the *De Civitate Dei* that Dante answers St. Peter's question in the Stellar Heaven, concerning the miracles of the New Testament and the Apostolic age as a proof of the divine character of Christianity:—

"It is incredible that Christ should have risen again in the flesh, and have ascended into heaven with that flesh; it is incredible that the world should have believed a thing so incredible; it is incredible that men despised and lowly, scanty in number and

[1] *Conf.* xi. 13. [2] *Conf.* xii. 3.
[3] *Conf.* xiii. 2-4; *De Genesi ad Litteram, liber imperfectus*, cap. 4, §16.

unlearned, should have been able so efficaciously to persuade the world, and even the learned therein, of a thing so incredible. . . . The world believed on account of a little band of despised, lowly, and ignorant men, because in such contemptible witnesses the Deity itself persuaded much more wondrously. For the arguments wherewith they convinced were wondrous deeds, not words; and those, who had not witnessed the resurrection and ascension of Christ, believed those who affirmed that they had seen it, not merely because they said so, but also because they wrought wonderful signs. . . . If men believe not that the Apostles of Christ worked these miracles, too, that they might be believed when they preached the resurrection and ascension of Christ, for us this one great miracle is sufficient — that the whole world believed it without any miracles." [1]

Thus Dante:—

"Io udii poi: 'L'antica e la novella
Proposizion che così ti conchiude,
Perchè l'hai tu per divina favella?'
Ed io: 'La prova che il ver mi dischiude
Son l'opere seguite, a che natura
Non scaldò ferro mai, nè battè incude.'
Risposto fummi: 'Di', chi t'assicura
Che quell'opere fosser? Quel medesmo
Che vuol provarsi, non altri, il ti giura.'
'Se il mondo si rivolse al Cristianesmo,'

[1] *De Civitate Dei*, xxii. 5. Cf. also, xxii. 8: "In eisdem quippe veracissimis libris cuncta conscripta sunt, et quae facta sunt, et propter quod credendum facta sunt."

Diss'io, ' senza miracoli, quest'uno
È tal, che gli altri non sono il centesmo;
Chè tu entrasti povero e digiuno
In campo, a seminar la buona pianta,
Che fu già vite, ed ora è fatta pruno.' " [1]

As we should expect, the chapter of impassioned eloquence with which the *De Civitate Dei* closes, *de aeterna felicitate Civitatis Dei sabbatoque perpetuo*, finds echo in the *Divina Commedia*. " Who is sufficient to think," cries St. Augustine, " much more to utter, what will be also the degrees of honours and glories for the rewards of merits? It is not, however, to be doubted that there will be such degrees. And also that blessed City will see this great good in itself, that no inferior will envy any superior, even as now the other Angels do not envy the Archangels; and no one will wish to be what he has not received, although he be united by a most peaceful bond of concord to him who has received, any more than in the body the eye wishes to be the finger, when a peaceful companioning of the whole flesh holds together both members. So, therefore, one will have

[1] " I heard then: ' The old and the new proposition that so convinces thee, wherefore dost thou hold it for the word of God? '

" And I: ' The proof that discloses the truth to me are the works that followed, for which nature never heated iron nor beat anvil.'

" Answer was made me: ' Say, who assures thee that those works were? That very same that needs be proved, none other, swears it to thee.'

" ' If the world was turned to Christianity,' I said, ' without miracles, this one is such, that the others are not the hundredth part;

" ' For thou didst enter poor and fasting into the field, to sow the good plant, that was once a vine and now is become a thorn.' "—*Par.* xxiv. 97-111.

a lesser gift than another, that he may have this gift also, to wish for no more." [1]

Thus, Piccarda Donati to Dante in the first sphere, the heaven of the Moon:—

" Frate, la nostra volontà quieta
Virtù di carità, che fa volerne
Sol quel ch'avemo, e d'altro non ci asseta.
Se disiassimo esser più superne,
Fôran discordi li nostri disiri
Dal voler di colui che qui ne cerne,
Che vedrai non capere in questi giri,
S'essere in caritate è qui *necesse*,
E se la sua natura ben rimiri.
Anzi è formale ad esto beato *esse*
Tenersi dentro alla divina voglia,
Per ch'una fansi nostre voglie stesse.
Sì che, come noi sem di soglia in soglia
Per questo regno, a tutto il regno piace,
Com' allo Re ch'a suo voler ne invoglia;
E la sua volontate è nostra pace:
Ella è quel mare al qual tutto si move,
Ciò ch'ella crea e che natura face." [2]

And, similarly, Justinian in the second sphere, the heaven of Mercury:—

[1] *De Civitate Dei*, xxii. 30.

[2] " Brother, the power of charity contents our will, and makes us long only for what we have, and gives us thirst for nought else.

" If we desired to be more exalted, our desires would be discordant with the will of Him who sets us here,

" Which thou wilt see has no place in these circles, if to abide in love be here necessity, and if thou well considerest love's nature.

" Nay, it is essential to this blessed existence to keep ourselves within the divine will, whereby our own wills are themselves made one.

" So that, as we are from grade to grade throughout this realm, to the whole realm gives joy, as to the King who sets our wills to His own will;

" And His will is our peace; it is that sea to which all moves, that it creates and that nature makes."—*Par.* iii. 70-87.

"Ma nel commensurar dei nostri gaggi
Col merto, è parte di nostra letizia,
Perchè non li vedem minor nè maggi.
Quindi addolcisce la viva giustizia
In noi l'affetto sì, che non si puote
Torcer giammai ad alcuna nequizia.
Diverse voci fan giù dolci note;
Così diversi scanni in nostra vita
Rendon dolce armonia tra queste rote."[1]

"Neither, therefore," continues St. Augustine, "shall they not have free will, because sin shall not delight them. Rather shall it be more free, being freed from the delight of sinning to an indeclinable delight of not sinning. For the first free will which was given to man, when he was first created righteous, could not sin, but could also sin; but this last shall be more potent than that, in as much as it shall be unable to sin. But this, too, by the gift of God, not by the possibility of his own nature. For it is one thing to be God; another to partake of God; God, by His nature, cannot sin; he who partakes of God receives from Him that he cannot sin."[2] And, further on: "The free will, therefore, of that City

[1] "But in the commeasuring of our rewards with our merit, is part of our joy, because we see them neither less nor more.

"Thereby the living Justice so sweetens affection in us, that it can never be drawn astray to any sinfulness.

"Diverse voices make on earth sweet melody; so diverse seats in our life render sweet harmony among these spheres."—*Par.* vi. 118-126.

[2] Augustine's whole idea of this *novissimum liberum arbitrium*, in this chapter, interprets Dante's *libero, dritto e sano è tuo arbitrio* (*Purg.* xxvii. 140). For free will in the blessed, cf. *Par.* xxi. 73-75:—

"Io veggio ben, diss'io, sacra lucerna,
Come libero amore in questa corte
Basta a seguir la provvidenza eterna."

will be both one in all and inseparable in each, freed from all evil, and filled with all good, enjoying unfailingly the blessedness of eternal joys, oblivious of faults, oblivious of punishments; but not for that so oblivious of its liberation, as not to be grateful to its Deliverer. As far as pertains to rational knowledge, there will be memory even of its past evils; but as far as regards the sense of experience, it will be altogether unmindful." [1]

Upon this is based Dante's conception of the purified lovers not remembering their past sins as personal experience, but as a source of joy in the divine ordination:—

> " Non però qui si pente, ma si ride;
> Non della colpa, ch'a mente non torna,
> Ma del valor ch'ordinò e provvide.
> Qui si rimira nell'arte che adorna
> Cotanto effetto, e discernesi il bene
> Per che al mondo di su quel di giù torna." [2]

The latter terzina echoes St. Augustine's words at the beginning of the same chapter, that the harmonies of body and soul, with the other great and wonderful things seen in that eternal felicity, " shall kindle the rational minds with the delight in ordained beauty into the praise of so great an Artificer." [3]

[1] *De Civ. Dei*, xxii. 30.

[2] " Yet here we repent not, but we smile; not for the fault, which returns not to memory, but for the Power that ordained and provided.

" Here we gaze upon the Art that gives beauty to so great a result, and perceive the good whereby the world below corresponds with that above."—*Par.* ix. 103-108. Cf. Mother Julian of Norwich, cap. 32: *Thou shalt see thyself, that all manner of thing shall be well.*

[3] *De Civ. Dei*, xxii. 30, *ad init.*

III

Although Dante was clearly influenced by St. Augustine mainly on the mystical side, his reference to him in the *De Monarchia*, as one of the *doctores*, shows that he regarded him as a theologian rather than as a contemplative.[1] As such, he might have been expected to appear among the twenty-four spirits who form the double garland of sempiternal roses in the fourth heaven; but we do not see him there, nor among any of the groups of souls who descend into the moving spheres to meet the poet as he ascends. It has been stated that, until the seventh heaven, the sphere of the contemplatives, is reached, Dante sees no spirit who was not officially canonised at the date of the poem. This, I think, is open to question;[2] but, in any case, St. Augustine does not personally enter the scene until the vision of the Empyrean, the true Paradise, where, in the celestial Rose, he is enthroned in the descending line that begins with St. John the Baptist. Here is he the fourth in order, St. Francis being second, and St. Benedict third.[3]

This order is obviously the reverse of the chrono-

[1] *Mon.* iii. 3, 87.

[2] Cf. S. Ferrari, *Il Paradiso di Dante*, p. 17. Anselm was certainly not canonised until later, but both Dionysius and John Chrysostom had been honoured as saints from an earlier epoch.

[3] *Par.* xxxii. 34-36.

logical. Dr. Moore suggests that St. Augustine "seems to be selected rather from his traditional connection with the great monastic order of Augustinians, and with hermits and solitaries in particular, than for his eminence as a theologian." [1] The Augustinian friars had been united into one body by Martin IV. in 1284, a few years before the date of the *Divina Commedia;* and, in the *Convivio*, we find St. Augustine similarly associated with St. Benedict, St. Francis, and St. Dominic, as the founder of a religious order.[2] But this does not quite explain the position that he holds in the Empyrean relatively to St. Francis and St. Benedict.

Some light is, I think, thrown upon the question by observing the position of the three saints, in relation with the opposite dividing line in the celestial Rose—the line that passes down from the throne of the Blessed Virgin and is composed of the women of the Old Testament. St. Francis, in whose person the memory of Christ's passion was renewed, and who represents the renovation of the life of evangelical perfection,[3] is opposite to Eve, restored to the beauty that was hers before the fall; St. Benedict, the great contemplative, is opposite to Rachel, the type of contemplation, or "reason illumined by divine revelation"; while the position of St. Augustine corresponds with that of Sarah. Now there is a certain tendency

[1] *Op. cit.*, i. p. 291. [2] *Conv.* iv. 28, 68-70.
[3] Ubertino da Casale, *Arbor Vitae Crucifixae*, v. 6, *init.*

among mediaeval writers to take Sarah as a type of the official Church, more particularly of the official Latin Church,[1] and the place of St. Augustine opposite to her seems, therefore, to mark him (as in the *De Monarchia*) as a doctor of the Church, an official exponent of her theology. Dante's idea, then, in the relative order of these three saints, may well be that, while theology is a sacred thing, contemplation is higher, and the perfect imitation of Christ, represented by St. Francis, is higher still.

[1] Cf. Isidore of Seville, *Quaestiones in Vetus Testamentum*, cap. 14 and cap. 16; Bede, *In Pentateuchum, Genesis*, cap. 20; Joachim of Flora, *Concordia novi ac veteris Testamenti*, ff. 18, 18 *v.*

CHAPTER III

DANTE AND DIONYSIUS

I. Dante's silence concerning the non-Christian Neo-Platonists; echoes of Plotinus, from St. Augustine, in the *Paradiso;* other Neo-Platonic currents in Dante's works. II. Dante's conception of Dionysius; his sources for the Dionysian doctrines. III. Influence of the *De Caelesti Hierarchia* upon the *Divina Commedia;* the nine orders of Angels and their ministry; the three ways of the mystic's ascent to the fruition of God. IV. Influence of the *De Divinis Nominibus* upon the *Paradiso;* the Divine light; the Divine likeness; creation as emanation; the universality of love; the soul's contemplation of all things in the vision of the First Cause.

I

It is, perhaps, a little strange that, with Dante's knowledge of the *De Civitate Dei*, none of the non-Christian Neo-Platonists are even named in the *Divina Commedia.* Porphyry, for instance, is frequently mentioned in St. Augustine's pages; but it may well be that the great doctor's description would, in Dante's estimation, suffice to exclude him from the company of those virtuous spirits in the *nobile castello* of Limbo, who, "if they were before Christianity, did not worship God aright."[1] For St. Augustine represents Porphyry as one who had some inkling of the truth, yet dared not defend it

[1] *Inf.* iv. 37.

against the cult of many gods; who contaminated the teaching of Plato with the impiety of the Chaldaeans; who, while professing himself a lover of virtue and wisdom, led men into most certain error, and, preferring the pride of vain knowledge, contemned the saving humility of Christ in the Incarnation.[1] It is true that certain denizens of the *nobile castello*—Dioscorides, Seneca, Ptolemy, and Galen, not to speak of Avicenna and Averroës—lived in the Christian era, even as Porphyry; but it would seem as though the conception of true "lovers of wisdom," like the Neo-Platonists, deliberately rejecting the Christian revelation, could find no place in the poet's scheme. We might, not unreasonably, have expected an exception in the case of that fountain-head of mysticism, Plotinus, through whom "Mysticism passed into Christian Theology, and became an important element in the religion of the middle ages and of the modern world";[2] for of him St. Augustine speaks as one of the more excellent philosophers, *ille magnus Platonicus*, whose view of the beatitude of the rational or intellectual soul in the fruition of the Divine Light is in agreement with the opening of the fourth Gospel.[3] But, even upon Plotinus, Dante is silent.

Attention has rightly been directed to "the fundamental identity of the poet's conception of the

[1] *De Civ. Dei*, x. 24, 26-28.

[2] Caird, *The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers*, ii. p. 210. Cf. Von Hügel, *The Mystical Element of Religion*, ii. p. 212.

[3] *De Civ. Dei*, x. 2.

beatific vision with the vision of the intelligible world as figured by Plotinus." [1] But this identity is common to all Christian mysticism. "We have no quarrel on this point," writes St. Augustine, "with these more excellent philosophers. For they saw, and handed down copiously in various ways in their writings, that the immortals and we alike attain beatitude by the presence of a certain intelligible light, which to them is God, and is something other than themselves, by which they are illumined and made bright, and in the participation thereof they remain perfect and blessed. Often and in many places does Plotinus assert, expounding the meaning of Plato, that that which they believe to be the soul of the universe hath not its beatitude from another source than ours, to wit, a light which it is not, but by which it was created, and from whose intelligible illumination it shineth intelligibly. He gives also a similitude to those incorporeal things from these visible and ample celestial bodies, as though that light were the sun and the soul the moon; for they deem the moon to be illumined by the presence of the sun. He says, then, that great Platonist, that the rational soul (which is rather to be called the intellectual, of whose nature he understands the souls of the immortal and blessed to be, whom he doubts not to be dwelling in celestial abodes) hath no nature above itself save God who created the world, by

[1] Thomas Whittaker, *The Neo-Platonists*, p. 193.

whom it, too, was made; nor is the blessed life and the light of the understanding of truth given to those supernal beings from any other source, than that whence it is given to us too; agreeing with the Gospel, where we read: *There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world* (John i. 6-9). In which difference it is clearly shown that the rational or intellectual soul, which was in John, could not be the light to itself, but shone by participation of another, which was the true Light. This, too, John himself expresses, where, bearing testimony to Him, he says: *Of his fulness have all we received* (i. 16)." [1]

This striking chapter is echoed again and again in the *Paradiso*. Thus, St. Peter Damian answers Dante in the seventh sphere:—

"Luce divina sopra me s'appunta,
Penetrando per questa ond'io m'inventro;
La cui virtù, col mio veder congiunta,
Mi leva sopra me tanto, ch'io veggio
La somma essenza della quale è munta.
Quinci vien l'allegrezza, ond'io fiammeggio;
Perchè alla vista mia, quant'ella è chiara,
La chiarità della fiamma pareggio." [2]

[1] *De Civ. Dei*, x. 2.

[2] "Divine light concentrates itself upon me, penetrating through this wherein I am enclosed;
"The virtue of which, conjoined with mine own sight, uplifts me

Again, in the imagery of the sun and moon, wherewith the illumination of the blessed in the Stellar Heaven is depicted:—

" Quale nei plenilunii sereni
Trivia ride tra le ninfe eterne,
Che dipingono il ciel per tutti i seni,
Vid'io, sopra migliaia di lucerne,
Un sol che tutte quante l'accendea,
Come fa il nostro le viste superne." [1]

And, yet again, in the figuration of the " light of glory," when the poet enters the Empyrean:—

" Lume è lassù che visibile face
Lo creatore a quella creatura,
Che solo in lui vedere ha la sua pace "; [2]

which is further developed in the vision of the final canto.[3] When Dante wrote, the doctrine of the *lumen gloriae*, by which the rational or intellectual soul is made *deiformis*, " godlike," and rendered capable of seeing God, the Divine Essence itself becoming the " intelligible form " of the intellect, was already a commonplace with scholastic theologians.[4]

Dante's knowledge of Plotinus was probably re-

above myself so far, that I see the supreme Essence from which it proceeds.

" Thence comes the joy wherewith I flame; for to my vision, in proportion to its clearness, I make the clearness of my flame respond."—*Par.* xxi. 83-90.

[1] " As in the calm skies at full moon Trivia smiles among the eternal nymphs, who paint the heaven through all its reaches,

" I saw, above thousands of lights, a Sun which enkindled all and each, even as ours does those stars on high."—*Par.* xxiii. 25-30.

[2] " A light there is on high that makes the Creator visible to that creature, which only in seeing Him hath its peace."—*Par.* xxx. 100-102.

[3] *Par.* xxxiii. 67-105. [4] Cf. *Summa Theologica*, I., q. 12, a. 5.

stricted to what he read of him in St. Augustine, and he does not seem to have been acquainted with the commentary of Macrobius on Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, from which St. Thomas Aquinas drew a part of his information on the subject.[1] Such passages in the *Divina Commedia* as that where, in the ninth sphere, the Angels are seen as circles of flame wheeling round the Point upon which "depends heaven and all nature," which so closely resembles the Plotinian conception of the soul as a mobile circle, moved by desire round the centre which is God, upon which all things depend, and embracing Him as closely as she can, have an independent Aristotelian derivation, though coloured by Dionysius.[2] There is, however, a strong Neo-Platonic current in Dante's works, independent of Augustine, alike in the *Convivio* and in the *Divina Commedia*. Its direct source is twofold: the pseudo-Aristotelian *De Causis*, and the Dionysian writings; and thus, in either case, ultimately harking back to Proclus.

[1] Aquinas cites Plotinus in three articles of the *Summa Theologica* (I. ii., q. 61, a. 5; II. ii., q. 48, a. 1; II. ii., q. 49, a. 3), on the cardinal virtues. In the first, he quotes him as saying that *Justitia Dei est observatio legis aeternae in suis operibus*, with which cf. *Par.* xxxii. 55-57. He refers again to Plotinus in the *De unitate intellectus* (*Opera, ed. cit.*, tom. xvi. p. 218), as teaching that the soul is the *verus homo*. In each case, the quotation is on the authority of Macrobius (*Comm. in Somnium Scipionis*, i. 8, ii. 12), and the words are not those of Plotinus himself.

[2] *Par.* xxviii. 25-42; Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Λ, cap. 7, 1072; Plotinus, *Ennead.* ii. 2, 2, and iv. 4, 16. Cf. Bouillet, *Les Ennéades de Plotin*, i. pp. 450, 455, 476.

II

It is evident that, when Dante wrote the *Convivio*, he knew nothing of Dionysius at first hand, and the Neo-Platonic elements in that work come exclusively from the *De Causis*.[1] His earlier treatment and arrangement of the nine orders of Angels (*Conv.* ii. 6) owe nothing to the *De Caelesti Hierarchia*, and his allusion to Dionysius (if the "Areopagite" is really meant, as Dr. Toynbee and others hold, by *Dionisio accademico*), merely as one of the Platonists who referred substantial generation to the stars,[2] shows that this great mystic was then, to the poet, no more than a name. Addressing the Italian cardinals, Dante associates Dionysius with Gregory, Ambrose, Augustine, John of Damascus, and Bede, as the great doctors whom the clergy neglect for the more profitable study of the decretalists.[3] In the *Paradiso*, on the other hand, we can trace the influence of the Dionysian writings throughout. There is a specific reference to the *De Caelesti Hierarchia* (*Dionysius de caelesti hierarchia loquens*), in the letter to Can Grande, in support of the statement that "every essence and virtue proceeds from the primal one, and the inferior intelligences receive as from a radiating source, and render the rays of their superior to their own inferior,

[1] Cf. Toynbee, *Dante Dictionary* (art. "De Causis"); Wicksteed, *The Convivio of Dante*, p. 146.

[2] *Conv.* ii. 14, 32-35.

[3] *Epist.* viii. 7.

after the fashion of mirrors." [1] The passage meant is apparently that in which Dionysius speaks of the members of a hierarchy as " divine images, mirrors most clear and spotless, receptive of the light from its source, and of the divine ray, and filled with the sacred infused radiance, and again manifesting this radiance ungrudgingly to those inferior to them, according to the divine laws." [2] The poet unhesitatingly follows the mediaeval tradition that accepted these christianised Neo-Platonic works as the authentic utterances of St. Paul's convert on Mars' hill.[3] Thus, Dionysius appears in the sphere of the Sun, as " he who in the flesh below saw deepest into the angelic nature and its ministry," [4] and, in the crystalline sphere, Beatrice speaks of the yearning, the *tanto disio*, with which Dionysius contemplated these angelic orders, declaring that their right arrangement was among the mystical truths revealed to him by St. Paul himself:—

" E Dionisio con tanto disio
A contemplar questi ordini si mise,
Che li nomò e distinse com'io.
Ma Gregorio da lui poi si divise;
Onde, sì tosto come l'occhio aperse
In questo ciel, di sè medesmo rise.

[1] *Epist.* x. 21. With the coupling of Dionysius and the *De Causis* in this passage, cf. *Summa Theologica*, I., q. 55, a. 3.

[2] *De Caelesti Hierarchia*, iii. 2.

[3] Acts, xvii. 34. It is now generally recognised that the Dionysian writings were composed at the end of the fifth, or beginning of the sixth century, and that their author borrowed largely from Proclus (who died in 485).

[4] *Par.* x. 115-117.

E se tanto segreto ver proferse
Mortale in terra, non voglio ch'ammiri;
Chè chi il vide quassù gliel discoperse
Con altro assai del ver di questi giri." [1]

St. Gregory, in his Homilies on the Gospels, refers to Dionysius as *Dionysius Areopagita, antiquus videlicet et venerabilis pater*, but, being practically ignorant of Greek, is compelled to cite him at hearsay.[2] The slightly different arrangement of the nine orders which he there gives (in which the Virtues and Principalities change places) was afterwards followed by St. Bernard;[3] but Aquinas, while attempting to show that there is no real disagreement between Gregory and Dionysius, finally established the latter's system.[4] It would seem, however, that Dante is here referring to the very different arrangement that Gregory had previously given in the *Moralia*, and which he himself had adopted in the *Convivio*, and he is thus repudiating his own previous error on the subject and that of St. Gregory at the same time.[5]

[1] " And Dionysius with such great desire set himself to contemplate these orders, that he named and distinguished them as I.

" But Gregory later departed from him; wherefore, as soon as he opened his eyes in this heaven, at himself he smiled.

" And if a mortal on earth uttered so great a secret truth, I would not have thee marvel; for he who saw it up here revealed it to him, with much else of the truth about these circles."—*Par.* xxviii. 130-139.

[2] *Hom. in Evangelia*, ii. 34, § 12.

[3] *De Consideratione*, v. 4. Cf. below, pp. 128-130.

[4] *Contra Gentiles*, iii. 80; *Summa Theol.*, I., q. 108, a. 5 and a. 6.

[5] *Moralia*, xxxii. 23, § 48; *Conv.* ii. 6. Cf. Giovanni Busnelli, *L'ordine dei cori angelici nel Convivio e nel Paradiso*, in the *Bullettino*, N.S., xviii., pp. 127, 128. The three alternative arrangements are therefore: (i.) Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones; Dominations, Virtues,

The original interpreter of the Dionysian doctrines to western Christendom was the Irish monk and mystic, Joannes Scotus Erigena, in the ninth century. In the first half of the twelfth century, Hugh of St. Victor composed an elaborate commentary upon Erigena's version of the *De Caelesti Hierarchia*. In the second half of the twelfth century, Joannes Sarracenus, the friend and correspondent of John of Salisbury, made a new translation of Dionysius direct from the Greek.[1] In the thirteenth century, Albertus Magnus made Erigena's version the basis of his own commentary, which includes all the works attributed to Dionysius.[2] St. Thomas Aquinas, in the *Summa Theologica*, quotes Dionysius sometimes in the version of Erigena, sometimes in that of Sarracenus, but more frequently is independent of both, apparently translating, either directly or through a colleague, from the original Greek text; in his commentary on the *De Divinis Nominibus*, on the other hand, he follows and uses the translation of Sarracenus through-

Powers; Principalities, Archangels, Angels (Dionysius, Aquinas, and the *Paradiso*); (ii.) Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones; Dominations, Principalities, Powers; Virtues, Archangels, Angels (Gregory in *Homilies* and Bernard); (iii.) Seraphim, Cherubim, Powers; Principalities, Virtues, Dominations; Thrones, Archangels, Angels (Gregory in *Moralia* and the *Convivio*).

[1] See his letter to John of Salisbury on his translation of the *De Caelesti Hierarchia*, in Migne, *Joannis cognomine Saresberiensis opera omnia* (*Pat. Lat.* cxcix.), coll. 143-144.

[2] *B. Alberti Magni opera omnia*, ed. Borgnet, tom. xiv. This volume does not contain Albertus' commentary on the *De Divinis Nominibus*, which is still unpublished (cf. P. Mandonnet, *Des écrits authentiques de S. Thomas d'Aquin*, p. 154).

out.[1] While that marvellous "text-book of angelic lore," the *De Caelesti Hierarchia*, is the only Dionysian work to which Dante expressly refers, there are manifest traces in the *Paradiso* of the influence of the *De Divinis Nominibus*, derived apparently from the version of Sarracenus and the commentary of Aquinas.

III

It is ultimately from the doctrines of Dionysius concerning the angelic hierarchies that Dante derived the conception upon which the spiritual structure of the *Paradiso* is mainly based.

Dionysius combines the scriptural representation of Angels with the Neo-Platonic theory of emanations from the Divine Being, by making these emanations three hierarchies of celestial intelligences bearing the appellations of the nine orders which are given in the Old Testament prophets and the Pauline epistles.[2] The purpose or meaning of a hierarchy is the utmost possible likeness to God and union with Him, in proportion to the divine illuminations conceded to it; each Angel is a mirror that receives the beams of

[1] *In librum beati Dionysii de Divinis Nominibus commentaria*, in *Opera, ed. cit.*, tom. xv. Cf. De Rubeis, *Dissertatio* viii., cap. 3 (in vol. i. of the Leonine edition of St. Thomas, pp. cxxxv., cxxxvi.).

[2] *Seraphim* (Isa. vi.); *Cherubim* (Ezek. x., xi., etc.); *Thrones* (Col. i. 16); *Dominions* or *Dominations* (Col. i. 16, Eph. i. 21); *Virtues*, δυνάμεις (Eph. i. 21, Rom. viii. 38); *Powers*, ἐξουσίαι (Col. i. 16, Eph. i. 21); *Principalities* (Col. i. 16, Eph. i. 21, Rom. viii. 38); *Archangels* (1 Thes. iv. 16, Jude 9); *Angels* (Rom. viii. 38, etc., etc.).

the primal and sovereign light, and reflects them upon all, in accordance with the divine plan for the government of the world, thus working to make each created thing, in its degree, like to God and united with Him.[1]

Thus Dante sees the nine orders as nine circles of flame, distinguished into three *ternari* or *gerarchie*, wheeling round the Point that symbolises the Divine Being:—

"Lo incendio lor seguiva ogni scintilla;
Ed eran tante, che il numero loro
Più che il doppiar degli scacchi s'immilla.
Io sentiva osannar di coro in coro
Al punto fisso che li tiene all' *ubi*,
E terrà sempre, nel qual sempre fôro.

. . . . . .

"Così veloci seguono i suoi vimi,
Per simigliarsi al punto quanto ponno,
E posson quanto a veder son sublimi.

. . . . . .

"Questi ordini di su tutti rimirano,
E di giù vincon sì che verso Dio
Tutti tirati sono e tutti tirano." [2]

[1] *De Cael. Hier.*, iii. 1-2.

[2] "Every spark followed their circle of flame, and they were so many that their number makes more thousands than the reduplication of the chess-board.

"I heard Hosannah rising from choir to choir to the fixed Point that holds them to that *where*, and ever shall hold, in which they have ever been. . . .

"So swiftly do they follow their own bonds, to liken themselves to that Point as most they can, and they can in measure as they are exalted in vision. . . .

"These orders all gaze upward, and downward so prevail that unto God all are drawn and all draw."—*Par.* xxviii. 91-96, 100-102, 127-129.

This drawing of all things to God is effected by the moving of the nine spheres, the mystical hammers whereby the Angels impress the likeness of the Divine ideas upon the universe, each of which is assigned to the rule and governance of one of the nine angelic orders.[1]

" All the appellations of the celestial intelligences," says Dionysius, " have the indication of the godlike characteristic of each," and manifest the special way in which it imitates the Divine likeness.[2] The name of each order depends upon its imitation or representation of some one of the Divine qualities or attributes, that, differing in each as received, are identified in the Divine Essence. So in Dante, the specific spiritual quality of the souls that appear in each successive heaven, and, to some extent, the matters spoken of therein, are coloured by the function or characteristic denoted by the appellation of the angelic order that moves that sphere.[3] But, while adopting the division and arrangement introduced by Dionysius and followed by Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica*, Dante modifies it in the light of

[1] *Par.* ii. 127-129.

[2] *De Cael. Hier.*, vii. 1. Albertus (*op. cit.*, p. 157) lays stress upon Dionysius here saying *appellations* (in Erigena, *cognominationes*) and not *names* (*nomina*), as referring only to the gifts from God whereby they are allotted to these hierarchical grades, not to the natural characteristics of the angelic orders, which are not known to us.

[3] Cf. Lubin, *op. cit.*, pp. 455-469, and my *Dante's Ten Heavens*, 2nd ed., pp. 23-30. This association of souls with the angelic orders is indicated by St. Gregory, *Hom. in Evangelia*, ii. 34, § 11, who, unlike Dante, places the contemplatives with the Seraphim.

a chapter in the *De Consideratione* of St. Bernard, upon which his actual figuration of each heaven is more closely based.

Further, Dionysius teaches that the general function and characteristic of every angelic hierarchy, and the effect of the divine light which it receives and communicates, are threefold: purifying, illuminating, and rendering perfect.[1] Through this, the Neo-Platonic doctrine of the threefold mystical way came into western mystical theology and reached Dante: the familiar doctrine that the soul's goal, the fruition of God, whereby the desire and will are made one with "the Love that moves the sun and the other stars," is attained by the three stages of purgation, illumination, and union. "Threefold," says the author of the *Mystica Theologia*, "is this way to God; to wit, first, the purgative way, whereby the mind is disposed to learn true wisdom. The second way is called the illuminative, whereby the mind by pondering is kindled to the burning of love. The third the unitive, whereby the mind, above all understanding, reason, and intellect, is directed upwards by God alone." [2]

Similarly, in the *Divina Commedia*, after the soul's conversion (symbolised as effected by the passage through the *Inferno*), we have these three stages in the mystic's progress towards God: the purgative,

[1] *De Cael. Hier.*, iii. 2.
[2] *Mystica Theologia, prologus, ed. cit.*, p. 700.

as seen in the passage through the seven terraces, and the laborious ascent of the mountain of the *Purgatorio;* the illuminative, represented by the revelations received in the Earthly Paradise, and during the ascent through the nine moving spheres of the *Paradiso;* the unitive, figured in the consummation of the vision in the Empyrean Heaven of Heavens, in those three divinest cantos that bring the poem to its close. In accordance with the Dionysian teaching on the nine angelic orders, each of the nine moving spheres represents an upward grade in detachment, light, and love, towards that Union, which is the anticipation of the Beatific Vision. And when, in the Empyrean, Dante looks upon the proper forms of the Angels in their eternal aspect, the Dionysian doctrine of their three-fold function is translated into the symbolism of colour:—

> "Le facce tutte avean di fiamma viva,
> E l'ali d'oro, e l'altro tanto bianco
> Che nulla neve a quel termine arriva";[1]

where the surpassing whiteness represents their work of purification, their golden wings the knowledge that illumines, the living flame of their faces the love that renders perfect.

[1] "Their faces had they all of living flame, and the wings of gold, and the rest so white that no snow attains that limit."—*Par.* xxxi. 13-15.

IV

It has been said of the *De Divinis Nominibus*: "The one underlying thought of the work, recurring again and again under different forms and phrases, is: God, the One Being, transcending all quality and predication, all affirmation and negation, and all intellectual conception, by the very force of His love and goodness gives to beings outside Himself their countless gradations, unites them in the closest bonds, keeps each by His care and direction in its appointed sphere, and draws them again in an ascending order to Himself." [1] We can trace an analogous trend of thought underlying the *Paradiso*, while there are several passages in the *De Divinis Nominibus* that seem echoed in this third part of the sacred poem, or, at least, afford noteworthy commentaries upon portions of it.

Thus, at the opening of the *Paradiso*, the representation of God and His action, under the imagery of the sun and its light, is thoroughly Dionysian:—

> "La gloria di colui che tutto move
> Per l'universo penetra, e risplende
> In una parte più, e meno altrove." [2]

And, again, in the Empyrean:—

[1] Joseph Stiglmayr, in *Catholic Encyclopedia* (art. "Dionysius").

[2] "The glory of Him who moveth all doth penetrate the universe, and gloweth in one part more and in another less."—*Par.* i. 1-3.

"Chè la luce divina è penetrante
Per l'universo, secondo ch' è degno,
Sì che nulla le puote essere ostante." [1]

"Even as our sun," writes Dionysius, "not as calculating or choosing, but by its very being, illumines all things able to partake of its light in their own degree; so, too, the Good, which is above the sun as the archetype is far above an obscure image, by His very essence sends the rays of His whole goodness into all existing things, according to their capacity." [2] "That light of the sun's ray is from the Good, and an image of the Goodness; on which account the Good, too, is praised under the name of Light, as in the image the archetype is manifested. For the goodness of the Divinity, existing above all things, penetrates from the highest and most exalted substances even to the lowest, and is still above all; neither the higher attaining to its excess, nor the lower passing beyond its ambit, but it both illumines all that are capable of being illumined, and creates and vivifies and contains and perfects, and is the measure of things existing, and age and number and order and ambit and cause and end. So, too, the manifest image of the divine Goodness, this great, all bright, and ever shining sun, as a most distant echo of the Good, both illumines all

[1] "For the Divine Light penetrates through the universe, according as it is worthy, so that nought can be an obstacle unto it."—*Par.* xxxi. 22-24.

[2] *De Div. Nom.*, iv. 1.

things whatever that can participate in it, and has the most extended light, extending the splendours of its own rays to all the visible world, both above and beneath; and if anything does not participate in them, this is not due to weakness or deficiency in its distribution of illumination, but to things not unfolding themselves to the participation of light, because of their inaptitude for receiving light. For the ray, passing over many things thus conditioned, illumines those that follow, and there is nought of visible things to which it does not reach by the exceeding greatness of its own splendour." [1] "The Good is called intelligible light, because He fills every supercelestial mind with intelligible light, and expels all ignorance and error from all souls in which they are implanted, and imparts sacred light to them all, and cleanses the eyes of their understanding from the slough that envelopes them through ignorance, and moves and opens those closed up by the great weight of darkness; and imparts at first a measured radiance. Then, to them that, as it were, taste the light, and desire it more, it communicates itself more fully, and more abundantly glows upon them, because they *have loved much*, and ever advances them to things higher, according to the capacity of each for the light." [2]

Further, Dionysius speaks of "the power of the

[1] *De Div. Nom.*, iv. 4. Cf. Aquinas, *op. cit.*, cap. iv. lectio 3, *de nomine luminis.*

[2] *De Div. Nom.*, iv. 5.

Divine likeness, which turns all created things to their cause," God "giving a Divine likeness to those who turn to Him by imitation according to their capacity": "To all who participate in likeness, God becomes the cause that they are similar, and He will be the maintainer of that likeness; and what is similar in all is like a kind of imprint of the Divine likeness, and completes their oneness." [1]

Upon this Aquinas comments:—

"The power of this likeness to God, which is given by God to things, appears in this: that all things, which come forth from God as effects from the cause, are turned back by desire to Him, as to their own cause; which would not be, unless all had a certain likeness to God. For everything loves and desires what is like itself. . . . Then when he says: *To all who participate in likeness, God becomes the cause that they are similar;* he shows how God is the cause of likeness in things; and he says that all things whatsoever that participate in likeness, have this from God, as from the cause, that they are similar. For things are called similar, according as they agree in some form; but every form is from God. And not only is He the cause of similar things, but also is the cause of that likeness itself, since He is the cause not only of living things, but of life itself. And whatever is called similar in any created things, is called similar in respect of *a kind of imprint*, that is,

[1] *De Div. Nom.*, ix. 6.

a certain representation of the Divine likeness, from which not only likeness is perfected, but also all the oneness that is in things." [1]

Thus Dante:—

> "Le cose tutte e quante
> Hann'ordine tra loro; e questo è forma
> Che l'universo a Dio fa simigliante.
> Qui veggion l'alte creature l'orma
> Dell'eterno valore, il quale è fine
> Al quale è fatta la toccata norma." [2]

The doctrine of creation as emanation, all things proceeding from the First Cause, and mirroring it in various degrees, while it remains one and the same in itself, is very similarly expressed by Dionysius and by Dante. Thus Dionysius, of the Godhead:—

"Bestowing and pouring out upon all beings the participations of all good things, it is unifiedly differentiated, and acts uniquely in multiplicity, and is manifolded without issuing from its oneness. For since God exists superessentially, but gives existence to things, and brings forth all substances; He is said to be manifolded while remaining that One, for from Him the many beings are brought forth. But He remains, none the less, the One in multiplicity, and unified in procession, and absolute in differen-

[1] *Op. cit.*, cap. ix. lectio 3.

[2] "All things and each have order among themselves; and this is the form that makes the universe resemble God.

"Here the highest creatures see the imprint of the eternal Power, which is the end for which the aforesaid norm was made" (*Par.* i. 103-108). So, too, the rest of the passage, and cf. above, pp. 58, 59.

tiation, because He is superessentially segregated from all things, and the whole is brought forth unifiedly from Him, and the outflowing of His never-failing self-impartings is not diminished. But being One, and imparting of oneness to every part and whole, to unity and to multiplicity, He is uniquely, superessentially One, being neither a part of a plurality, nor a whole made up of parts; and thus He is neither one (nor shares in unity), nor possesses one. Nay, far beyond these, He is above the unity which is that of things, bringing forth and perfecting and holding together (every unity and) multiplicity." [1]

Upon this Aquinas comments: " For He is not as the one that is part of multiplicity, since nothing can be numbered with Him as equal; neither is He one as some whole made up out of parts; and so He is not one in the same way as others, nor does He have the one as Himself participating; but He is One, as far beyond those things that are this one, inasmuch as He is above the one that is found in created beings; and He is the One that produces multiplicity of things in being, and perfects, by attributing to things their proper perfection, and holds together, by preserving all things in their being and in their order." [2]

[1] *De Div. Nom.*, ii. 11. The words in brackets are not in the Latin version.

[2] *Op. cit.*, cap. ii. lectio 6.

So, too, Dante, speaking especially of the number of the Angels:—

> "Vedi l'eccelso omai, e la larghezza
> Dell'eterno valor, poscia che tanti
> Speculi fatti s'ha, in che si spezza,
> Uno manendo in sè, come davanti." [1]

Again, Dionysius writes:—

"The perfect Goodness, passing through the universe, not only goes forth to those most holy substances which are around itself, but extends itself even to the most remote; being present indeed totally to the former, but to the others subordinately, and to the rest remotely, as each existing thing can participate in it. And the first participate in the Good entirely; the second are deprived of it, more or less; but others have a more obscure participation in the Good, and to others the Good is present as a remote echo." [2]

Commenting upon this passage, Aquinas takes it as showing "how the Good is found more or less in things"; *the perfect Goodness passing through the universe*, "inasmuch as it communicates itself to all things by the likeness of its goodness":—

"To those most holy substances, the Angels, the Divine Goodness is *totally present*, as perfectly partici-

[1] "See now the height and the breadth of the eternal Power, since it has made itself so many mirrors, in which it is distributed, remaining One in itself as before."—*Par.* xxix. 142-145.

[2] *De Div. Nom.*, iv. 20. Dante similarly refers to the Angels as *sustanzie pie* (*Purg.* xxx. 101), *queste sustanzie* (*Par.* xxix. 76), *sustanzie sempiterne* (*Par.* xxvi. 39).

pated by them as far as is possible to a creature; but to others *subordinately*, that is, it is present in an inferior fashion, by whom indeed it is participated, but not so perfectly as by the Angels, and this can be referred to human souls; *but to the rest remotely*, that is, it is present in the lowest way, as to irrational creatures. And this, indeed, happens according to the capacity of each for participating in the Divine Goodness. For some participate in the Divine Goodness entirely and perfectly, as far as is possible to a creature; on account of which he says, that to them *the Divine Goodness is totally present.* But others *are deprived* of this perfect participation, receding from it according to the *more or less;* as is clear in the divers grades of beings, and especially in living creatures (*i.e.*, human beings). *But others have a more obscure participation in the Good;* as corporeal creatures, and especially the inanimate, in which the brightness of the Divine Goodness is in a measure obscured, on account of their materiality and corruptibility; the obscurity in them being observed in this, that they are not apprehended by the intellect actually, but only potentially.[1] To some again, *the Good is present as a remote echo*, and these are they that hold the lowest grade in goodness; as those that

[1] Cf. *Par.* iv. 40-42:—

> " Così parlar conviensi al vostro ingegno,
> Però che solo da sensato apprende
> Ciò che fa poscia d'intelletto degno."

have undergone corruption, and those that are called evil." [1]

Thus Dante, in the representation of all created things as a reflection of the Divine Idea:—

"Ciò che non more, e ciò che può morire,
Non è se non splendor di quella idea
Che partorisce, amando, il nostro Sire;
Chè quella viva luce che sì mea
Dal suo lucente, che non si disuna
Da lui, nè dall'amor che a lor s'intrea,
Per sua bontate il suo raggiare aduna,
Quasi specchiato, in nove sussistenze,
Eternalmente rimanendosi una.
Quindi discende all'ultime potenze,
Giù, d'atto in atto, tanto divenendo,
Che più non fa che brevi contingenze;
E queste contingenze essere intendo
Le cose generate, che produce
Con seme e senza seme il ciel movendo." [2]

Similarly, the image that follows, of matter as the wax that more or less imperfectly receives the "ideal impress," is largely Dionysian, though Dante com-

[1] *Op. cit.*, cap. iv. lectio 16.

[2] "That which dieth not, and that which can die, is nought save a splendour of that Idea which our Lord, by His love, brings forth;

"For that living Light, which so flows out from its radiant Source that it is not disunited from it, nor from the Love that makes three with them,

"Through its goodness concentrates its rays, as it were mirrored, in nine subsistences, itself eternally remaining One.

"Thence it descends to the remotest potentialities, down, from act to act, becoming such that it makes no more save brief contingencies;

"And these contingencies I understand to be things generated, which the heaven by its motion produces with and without seed."—*Par.* xiii. 52-66. I take the *nove sussistenze* as the nine angelic orders rather than the nine moving spheres.

plicates it by the introduction of stellar influences as secondary causes, which is not found in Dionysius:—

" La cera di costoro, e chi la duce,
Non sta d'un modo, e però sotto il segno
Ideale poi più e men traluce;
Ond'egli avvien ch'un medesimo legno,
Secondo specie, meglio e peggio frutta,
E voi nascete con diverso ingegno.
Se fosse a punto la cera dedutta,
E fosse il cielo in sua virtù suprema,
La luce del suggel parrebbe tutta;
Ma la natura la dà sempre scema,
Similemente operando all'artista,
Ch'ha l'abito dell'arte e man che trema." [1]

Dionysius compares the Deity, participated whole by each of its participants, and partially by none, to the archetypal seal, received whole in all impressions, but diversely because of the diverse quality of the wax:—

" Even as many impressions of a seal participate in the archetypal seal, which in each of the impressions is whole and the same, and in none in any way partial. One might say: The seal is not whole and the same in all the impressions. But of this the seal is not the cause, for it presses itself whole and the same upon each; but the diversity of the participants

[1] " The wax of these, and that which moulds it, is not in one fashion, and therefore, under the ideal impress, it then shines forth more or less.

" Whence it happens that one same tree, according to kind, bears better or worse fruit, and you are born with diverse genius.

" If the wax were perfectly prepared, and the heaven were in its highest power, the light of the seal would all be manifest;

" But nature ever gives it imperfect, working in like fashion to the artist, who has the skill of his art and a hand that trembles."—*Par.* xiii. 67-78.

makes dissimilar impressions of one and the same complete principal form. If they were soft and easily moulded, and smooth and unmixed, and neither previously moulded and hard, nor too fusible and unstable, they would have the figure clear and smooth and permanent. But if any part of the foresaid aptitude is lacking, this will be the cause of what is not communicated and what is indistinct, and of all else that comes from inaptitude for participation." [1]

And, in Dante and Dionysius alike, the argument passes on from the image of the seal to the Incarnation, though the line pursued now differs.

From Dionysius, too, came to Dante the Neo-Platonic theory of the three motions of the soul when she strives to be united to the illuminations of the Beautiful and the Good.[2] In Dionysius, the progression of being from the pre-existing Divine Goodness, and, in Dante, the flowing of the soul's knowledge from God in the Beatific Vision, are alike represented by the image of the number raying forth from the monad.[3] Dionysius speaks of God as the self-existing Equality, which is productive of every equality, and Dante calls Him *la prima Equalità*, "the first Equality," which makes love and understanding of equal poise in the souls to which it appears.[4]

[1] *De Div. Nom.*, ii. 5-6.

[2] *De Div. Nom.*, iv. 8-10; *Par.* xxi. 37-39, xxxi. 46-48. Cf. below, chap. v. pp. 174, 175.

[3] *De Div. Nom.*, v. 6; *Par.* xv. 55-57.

[4] *De Div. Nom.*, ix. 10; *Par.* xv. 73-78. Cf. Anselm, *Proslogion*, cap. 18.

Again, the universality of love, and the part played by love in the creation, are enunciated by both alike. Thus Dionysius:—

"By all things is the Beautiful and the Good desired and loved and chosen to love . . . and all things, by desiring the Beautiful and the Good, do and will all things whatever they do and will. Further, this saying is assuredly true, that the very Cause of all things, by reason of the overflow of His goodness, loves all, makes all, perfects all, holds together all, turns all to Himself, and the Divine Love is the Good and of the Good and by reason of the Good. For that Love itself, working the good of existing things, pre-existing overflowingly in the Good, did not suffer Him to remain in Himself without fruit, but moved Him to working, according to the overflowing which is generative of all." [1]

Aquinas deduces from this passage a complete philosophy of love, first as existing in the creature and then as in the Creator.

As to love in the creature, starting from the proposition that "the object of desire and of love is the Beautiful and the Good," he says that love pertains

[1] *De Div. Nom.*, iv. 10. Similarly (*De Cael. Hier.*, iv. 1) of the creation of the Angels: "Through His universal goodness the superessential Godhead, deciding the essences of all things that are, brought them into being. For this is the special characteristic of the Cause of all things, and of the Goodness surpassing all, to call all existing things to the participation of Himself, as to each of existing things is determined from its own analogy. For all existing things share in the providence which flows out from the superessential Godhead, the Supreme Cause."

to the appetite, and is the primal and common root of all appetitive workings. "For nothing is desired save what is loved; nor does any one rejoice in the possession of a thing, unless because he loves it; nor is any one sad about anything, unless because it is contrary to what is loved. And, therefore, the definition of love is taken from what is the common object of appetite. But this is the good. From this, therefore, anything is said to be loved because the appetite of the lover is related to it as to his good. This disposition or adaptation of the appetite to anything as to its good, is called love." "Now by saying *chosen*, he determines the mode of love. For since love pertains to the appetite, the order of the loves is according to the order of the appetites. But the most imperfect of appetites is natural appetite without cognition, which implies nothing other than natural inclination. Above this is the sensible appetite, because it follows cognition, but is without free election. But the highest appetite is that which is with cognition and free election; for this is the appetite which in a measure moves itself; wherefore the love pertaining to this is the most perfect, and is called *dilectio*, inasmuch as what is to be loved is discerned by free election." [1]

"Then when he says: *And all things, by desiring the Beautiful and the Good, do and will all things what-*

[1] *Op. cit.*, cap. iv. lectio 9: *De ipso amore.* Cf. *Purg.* xviii. 55-72; *Par.* i. 118-120.

ever they do and will; he shows what love does in the lover. For since love is the common root of appetite, it is necessary that every working of the appetite is caused by love; and since every operation of all things is caused by appetite, it follows that every action of each thing is caused by love; and this is what he says, that all things from desire of the Beautiful and the Good, *do and will whatever they do and will.* And he takes this desire for love, for it is its effect." [1]

This is manifestly the basis of Vergil's great discourse to Dante in the fourth terrace of Purgatory:—

> " 'Nè creator nè creatura mai,'
> Cominciò ei, 'figliuol, fu senza amore,
> O naturale o d'animo; e tu il sai.' " [2]

Turning from love as existing in the creature to love as in the Creator, Aquinas continues:—

"Then when he says: *This saying is assuredly true, that the very Cause of all things, by reason of the overflow of His goodness, loves all;* he shows how God loves. And he says that we can assuredly say that God, who is the *Cause of all things, by reason of the overflow of His goodness, loves them all,* and through love *makes all,* by giving them being, and *perfects all,* by filling each with its proper perfection, and *holds together all,* by preserving them in being, and *turns all to Himself,* that is, ordains them to Himself as to

[1] *Op. cit.*, cap. iv. lectio 9: *De ipso amore.*

[2] " 'Neither creator nor creature ever,' he began, 'son, was without love, either natural or conscious; and thou knowest it.' "—*Purg.* xvii. 91-93. Cf. above, pp. 55-58.

their end. And so we say: *Divine Love is the Good* and is *of the Good*, that is, of God as lover, and is *by reason of the Good*, that is, by reason of its object; for God loves nothing save on account of His own goodness. And to explain what he has said, he adds, that the love whereby God loves existing things is *generative* of goodness in them; and, on account of this, he says that the good itself, which pre-exists as cause in the Good, that is, in God, *overflowingly*, as all things pertaining to perfection which are in creatures, is more excellently in God. And, therefore, he said that the Divine Love is *of the Good*. This Divine Love, I say, *did not suffer Him to remain in Himself without fruit*, that is, without production of creatures; but love *moved Him to working*, according to the most excellent mode of working, inasmuch as it produced all things into being. For out of the love of His own goodness it proceeded that He willed to diffuse His goodness and communicate it to others, as far as was possible, that is, in the way of likeness, and that His goodness did not merely remain in Himself, but flowed out to other things." [1]

As Aquinas himself puts it elsewhere: "God's principal purpose in created things is the good which consists in their resemblance to Himself." [2] Dionysius (and, less explicitly, Aquinas as well) is here harking back to the famous passage of Plato in the *Timaeus*:—

"Let me tell you then why the creator made this

[1] *Op. cit., loc. cit.* [2] *Summa Theologica*, I., q. 50, a. 1.

world of generation. He was good, and the good can never have any jealousy of anything. And being free from jealousy, he desired that all things should be as like himself as they could be. This is in the truest sense the origin of creation and of the world, as we should do well in believing on the testimony of wise men." [1]

There seems a direct echo of Plato's words in the poet's description of creation in the sphere of Mercury:—

> "La divina bontà, che da sè sperne
> Ogni livore, ardendo in sè sfavilla
> Sì che dispiega le bellezze eterne"; [2]

whereas the doctrine of Dionysius receives supreme poetical expression in the passage where Beatrice, in the ninth sphere, declares again that God created for love alone: that His creatures, the splendours that are illumined by His light and enkindled by His love, and who reflect His glory, might resemble Himself in the joy of conscious existence:—

[1] *Timaeus*, 29D (Jowett). Chalcidius, in whose version Dante would have known the *Timaeus* (if he knew it at first hand, which is doubtful), gives it thus: "Dicendum igitur, cur rerum conditor fabricatorque geniturae omne hoc instituendum putaverit. Optimus erat; ab optimo porro invidia longe relegata est. Itaque consequenter cuncta sui similia, prout cuiusque natura capax beatitudinis esse poterat, effici voluit. Quam quidem voluntatem dei originem rerum certissimam si quis ponat, recte eum putare consentiam."—*Platonis Timaeus interprete Chalcidio*, ed. Ioh. Wrobel, p. 26.

[2] "The Divine Goodness, that spurns from itself all envy, burning within itself, sends forth such sparks that it unfolds the eternal beauties."—*Par.* vii. 64-66. Benvenuto da Imola, *Comentum*, iv. p. 469, notes the echo of the *Timaeus*.

" Non per avere a sè di bene acquisto,
Ch'esser non può, ma perchè suo splendore
Potesse, risplendendo, dir: *Subsisto ;*
In sua eternità di tempo fuore,
Fuor d'ogni altro comprender, come i piacque,
S'aperse in nuovi amor l'eterno amore." [1]

Finally, we may notice how the poet's ultimate vision of all things in God, where he " consumes his sight " (actualises, that is, all his potentialities of spiritual vision in looking upon the eternal Light), is tinged with the Dionysian philosophy as interpreted by Aquinas.

" From and in the self-existent Divine Goodness," writes Dionysius, " is Being itself, and the principles of things that be, and all things that be, and what are in any way held together by being; and this incomprehensibly, and unitedly, and singularly." [2] Upon this Aquinas comments: " He says therefore, first, that not only from the goodness of God itself, but also in it, is existence itself in itself, which is the participation of God, and all the principles of existing things, and all existences, both substances and accidents, and all things that in any way are included under Being." [3]

And to this vision of nature, in which all the pro-

[1] " Not to have acquisition of good to Himself, which cannot be, but that His splendour might, as it glowed, say: *I am ;*
" In His eternity, outside of time, outside of every other limit, as pleased Him, the eternal Love unfolded Himself in new loves."—*Par.* xxix. 13-18.

[2] *De Div. Nom.*, v. 6.

[3] *In librum beati Dionysii de Div. Nom.*, cap. v. lectio 1.

portions are individually included in the whole within one unconfused union (even as the several powers are uniformly included in the soul), the mind of the mystic can ascend:—

"There is nothing, then, unfitting that, ascending from obscure images to the Cause of all, we should contemplate, with supermundane eyes, all things in the Cause of all, even those contrary to each other, in a simple fashion and unitedly. For it is the source of existing things, from which are both Being itself, and all things existing in whatever fashion; every beginning, every end, every life, every immortality, every wisdom, every harmony, every power, every guardianship, every stability, every distribution, every understanding, every speech, every sense, every habit, every abiding, every motion, every union, every mingling, every friendship, every concordance, every distinction, every definition, and all other things whatsoever that exist by being." [1]

Thus Dante, in the eternal Light, sees all things, after a single fashion (*un semplice lume*) and unitedly (*quasi conflati insieme*), everything conceivable by thought as capable of existence in itself (*sustanzia*), or only in something else as a mode of being (*accidenti*), and their relations (*costume*):—

> "O abbondante grazia, ond'io presunsi
> Ficcar lo viso per la luce eterna
> Tanto, che la veduta vi consunsi!

[1] *De Div. Nom.*, v. 7.

Nel suo profondo vidi che s'interna,
Legato con amore in un volume,
Ciò che per l'universo si squaderna;
Sustanzia ed accidenti e lor costume,
Quasi conflati insieme per tal modo,
Che ciò ch'io dico è un semplice lume.
La forma universal di questo nodo,
Credo ch'io vidi, perchè più di largo,
Dicendo questo, mi sento ch'io godo." [1]

[1] " O grace abundant, by which I presumed to fix my gaze through the eternal Light so far that I consumed my power of vision therein!

" Within its depths I saw contained, bound by love into one volume, what is dispersed in leaves throughout the universe;

" Substance and accidents and their relation, as it were fused together in such fashion that what I speak of is one simple light.

" The universal form of this union I believe that I saw, because more copiously, in saying this, I feel that I rejoice."—*Par.* xxxiii. 82-93.

CHAPTER IV

DANTE AND ST. BERNARD

I. Dante and Abelard; St. Bernard's rebuke of corruption in the Church echoed by the poet; St. Bernard and Eugenius III., Dante and Boniface VIII.; St. Bernard's teaching on the perfect love of God, in his *De diligendo Deo;* the resurrection of the body. II. St. Bernard's *De Consideratione;* its analogies with the *De Monarchia* and the *Divina Commedia;* correspondence between the nine orders of Angels and the nine moving spheres; the quest of the Divine Union. III. The part of St. Bernard in the *Paradiso* and his sermons on the *Song of Solomon;* his influence on the closing cantos of the sacred poem; the "holy orison" to the Blessed Virgin.

I

St. Bernard is, after Beatrice, the most vividly realised personality in the *Paradiso*, and the one who plays the most important part therein. It is noticeable that, whereas Dante represents him as pre-eminently a contemplative, the saint's own contemporaries and successors, down to St. Bonaventura,[1] were more impressed by his career as an ecclesiastical statesman and preacher of righteousness. Nor was his mysticism the only part of his work that has influenced the divine poet.

The great abbot of Clairvaux would have appealed to Dante especially in three ways: as the reformer of ecclesiastical discipline, who sternly rebuked the

[1] Cf. *De reductione Artium ad Theologiam*, § 5.

disorders of the monks and prelates; as the mystic, whose inner life was modelled upon the *Song of Solomon*, the book which *spira di tale amor*, " breathes forth so much love "; [1] as the devoted servant of Mary, *quella regina benedetta Maria, lo cui nome fu in grandissima reverenza ne le parole di questa Beatrice beata*.[2]

Dante is completely silent on the subject of St. Bernard's most famous opponent. Peter Abelard, indeed, is the figure that, even more than Plotinus, one most misses in the *Divina Commedia*. It is obvious that his relation to St. Bernard is somewhat analogous with that of Siger of Brabant and Joachim of Flora to St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventura, beside whom respectively these two supposed heretics appear in the fourth heaven.[3] But the poet probably knew little of Abelard save in the light of St. Bernard's fiery denunciations, and the former's rationalising definition of faith would have been rejected by him as emphatically as it had been by the contemplative of Clairvaux.[4] Nevertheless, Abelard profoundly influenced the method of the

[1] *Par.* x. 110.

[2] *Vita Nuova*, § 29. Cf., generally, Pietro Vigo, *L'ultima guida di Dante e le affinità di due anime grandi*.

[3] *Par.* x. 133-138, xii. 139-141. Cf. Felice Tocco, *Quel che non c'è nella Divina Commedia*, p. 13, and see below, chap. vii.

[4] " Faith is the judgment concerning things not seen, that is, things not subject to the senses of the body ": *Est quippe fides existimatio rerum non apparentium, hoc est sensibus corporis non subjacentium* (*Introductio ad Theologiam*, i. 1; *Abaelardi Opera*, ed. Migne, col. 981). Cf. Bernard, *Tractatus de erroribus Petri Abaelardi*, cap. iv. § 9, and Dante, *Par.* xxiv. 64-66, where the Epistle to the Hebrews (xi. 1) is naturally followed.

later schoolmen, and, through them, Dante. "By questioning," he wrote, "we come to seeking, and by seeking we perceive the truth; even as the Truth itself saith: *Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you* (Matt. vii. 7). He taught us this by His own example, when, about the twelfth year of His age, He chose to be found *sitting in the midst of the doctors, and asking them questions* (Luke, ii. 46); showing us rather the form of a disciple in questioning than of a master in preaching, albeit there was in Him the full and perfect wisdom of God."[1] The method, thus enunciated by Abelard, was adopted by Peter Lombard, whose *Sentences* were founded on the model of the former's *Sic et Non*, and it was subsequently developed by Aquinas, especially in the *Summa Theologica:* the method, that is, of setting forth the arguments for and against a doctrine or view, and establishing the truth in the apparent conflict of authorities. It has left its trace on the *Paradiso*, in the questions asked and difficulties solved, as Beatrice leads Dante upwards, step by step, through the moving spheres, to the possession of the supreme Truth, *di fuor dal qual nessun vero si spazia*.[2]

In St. Bernard's *Apologia* (*de vita et moribus Religiosorum*), and in his *Tractatus de moribus et*

[1] *Sic et Non, prologus, ed. cit.*, col. 1349. The omission of the words, *both hearing them*, from the text in St. Luke may be accidental, but it is curiously characteristic of Abelard's mental disposition.

[2] *Par.* iv. 124-132. These lines give perfect poetic and spiritual expression to Abelard's method, but, as already stated, Dante's source seems to be St. Augustine (cf. above, p. 64).

officio Episcoporum, the one dealing with the monks, the other with the prelates, we find the same lamentation over the betrayal of great ideals, the same rebuke of corruption and avarice, that we hear in the *Divina Commedia*.[1] Thus, in the *Apologia*, Bernard contrasts the laxness and intemperance of modern monks with the austerity of those of old:—

"Who in the beginning, when the monastic order began, would believe that monks would sink to such idleness? O how far we are from those who were monks in the days of Anthony! There is no one who seeks the heavenly bread, no one who offers it. They talk nought of the Scriptures, nought of the salvation of souls; but jokes and laughter and idle words are uttered." [2]

Dante similarly bewails the degeneration of each order in turn, declaring finally, through the mouth of St. Benedict, that the corruption is universal; and he transfers St. Bernard's words, which refer mainly to the conversation of the monks during recreation, to the practice of contemporary preachers, ending with a thrust at the unworthy monks of St. Anthony in a Florentine convent:—

> "E se guardi al principio di ciascuno,
> Poscia riguardi là dov' è trascorso,
> Tu vederai del bianco fatto bruno." [3]

[1] Cf. Vigo, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-20. [2] *Apologia*, cap. ix. § 19.

[3] "And if thou look to the beginning of each, then look again whither it has gone astray, thou shalt see the white become dark."—*Par.* xxii. 91-93.

" Non disse Cristo al suo primo convento:
Andate, e predicate al mondo ciance;
Ma diede lor verace fondamento;
E quel tanto sonò nelle sue guance,
Sì ch'a pugnar, per accender la fede,
Dell' evangelio fêro scudo e lance.
Ora si va con motti e con iscede
A predicare, e pur che ben si rida,
Gonfia il cappuccio, e più non si richiede.
Ma tale uccel nel becchetto s'annida,
Che, se il vulgo il vedesse, vederebbe
La perdonanza di che si confida;
Per cui tanta stoltizia in terra crebbe,
Che, senza prova d'alcun testimonio,
Ad ogni promission si converrebbe.
Di questo ingrassa il porco sant' Antonio,
Ed altri ancor che son assai più porci,
Pagando di moneta senza conio." [1]

The *Tractatus de moribus et officio Episcoporum* offers a suggestive comparison with the denunciation of the lives of the *moderni pastori*, the great prelates and cardinals, placed by Dante on the lips of St. Peter Damian; but Dante's immediate source, if he had any source save what he had seen with his own

[1] " Christ said not to His first gathering: Go, and preach chatter to the world; but gave them the true foundation;

" And that alone sounded on their lips, so that in their combat, to enkindle the faith, they made of the Gospel shield and lance.

" Now with japes and foolery men go to preach, and, if but the laugh is loud, the cowl inflates, and no more is required.

" But such a bird is nestling in the hood, that, if the people saw it, they would see the pardoning in which they trust;

" Through which such folly has increased on earth, that, without proof of any testimony, they would fall in with every promise (*i.e.* perform the conditions enjoined to gain the indulgence).

" On this doth Anthony fatten his pig, and others, too, that are far worse pigs, paying with money without stamp (of authority)."—*Par.* xxix. 109-126.

eyes, was more probably Pier Damiano's own writings than those of St. Bernard.[1]

Again, in St. Bernard's letter to his dear friend and beloved disciple, Bernard of Pisa, who in 1145 had been elected pope as Eugenius III., we hear a note which Dante echoes in his denunciation of Boniface VIII. and the popes of his own day. St. Bernard is admonishing Eugenius on the terrible responsibility of the position to which he has unexpectedly been called:—

"Terrible indeed, terrible is this place. The place, I say, in which thou standest is holy ground; it is the place of Peter, the place of the Prince of the Apostles, where his feet have stood. It is the place of him, whom the Lord appointed master of His house, and prince of all His possession. If, perchance, thou shouldst turn aside from the way of the Lord, he was buried in the same place that he may be for a testimony against thee. Deservedly was the Church entrusted to such a pastor, to such a foster-father, whilst she was still tender, still in her swaddling-clothes; that she might be taught by his precept and educated by his example to tread under foot all

[1] *Par.* xxi. 124-135. Cf. Peter Damian, *Epist.* ii. 1 (*ad S. R. E. Episcopos Cardinales*). Similarly, the lines placed on Peter Damian's lips concerning the mystery of predestination (*Par.* xxi. 91-102) are reminiscent of a passage in his own *De Divina Omnipotentia* (*Opusc.* xxxvi. cap. 5). Further, Peter Damian's *De abdicatione Episcopatus* (*Opusc.* xix. cap. 6 and cap. 3) seems the source of Dante's punishment of the simoniacal popes (*Inf.* xix. 73-78) and the episode of Vanni Fucci (*Inf.* xxiv. 124).

earthly things; for he had kept his hands clean from every gift, and said from his heart and with a good conscience: *Silver and gold have I none.*" [1]

This conception of the tomb of the Prince of the Apostles standing in Rome as a testimony against an unworthy pope is hurled at Boniface VIII. in the third sphere,[2] and uttered with greater vehemence by St. Peter himself in the Stellar Heaven, where we have the same dramatic repetition of the key-word, *locus* or *loco*, the "place" that the Church's first pastor hallowed and his successor has profaned:—

"Quegli ch'usurpa in terra il loco mio,
Il loco mio, il loco mio che vaca
Nella presenza del Figliuol di Dio,
Fatto ha del cimitero mio cloaca
Del sangue e della puzza, onde il perverso
Che cadde di quassù, laggiù si placa." [3]

And a similar note to that struck by St. Bernard is sounded in Dante's rebuke of Nicholas III.:—

"Deh or mi di', quanto tesoro volle
Nostro Signore in prima da san Pietro,
Che ponesse le chiavi in sua balìa?
Certo non chiese se non: Viemmi retro.
Nè Pier nè gli altri tolsero a Mattia
Oro od argento, quando fu sortito
Al loco che perdè l'anima ria.
Però ti sta, chè tu se' ben punito." [4]

[1] *Epist.* 238 (Migne), § 4. [2] *Par.* ix. 139-142.

[3] "He who usurps on earth my place, my place, my place which is vacant in the presence of the Son of God,
"Has made of my sepulchre a sewer for the blood and the filth wherewith the evil one, who fell from here above, is consoled down there."—*Par.* xxvii. 22-27.

[4] "Ah, tell me now, how much treasure Our Lord required from

In the *De diligendo Deo*, on the other hand, we see Bernard as a mystic. It is here that he teaches that the cause of loving God is God Himself, and the mode, or measure, of loving Him is to love Him without measure — doctrines which receive more philosophical exposition in Dante's answer to St. John on pure love or charity in the Stellar Heaven [1] —and that, rarely and for brief moments, even in this life, the soul can be so united to God in love as to become godlike. This state of ecstatic contemplation, anticipating the eternal and unchanging life of the soul in the hereafter, is the state to which Dante attains in the consummation of the vision under Bernard's own guidance. " Blessed and holy," writes the saint, " should I call one to whom it has been granted to experience such a thing in this mortal life at rare intervals, or even once, and this suddenly, and for the space of hardly a moment. For in a certain manner to lose thyself, as though thou wert not, and to be utterly unconscious of thyself, and to be emptied of thyself, and as it were brought to nothing, pertains to celestial conversation, not to human affection. To be thus touched is to become godlike." [2] It is the same as the mystical ecstasy and

Saint Peter, before He placed the keys into his charge? Surely He demanded nought save: *Follow Me.*

" Nor did Peter nor the others take gold or silver from Matthias, when he was allotted to the place that the guilty soul had lost. Therefore stay here, for thou art justly punished."—*Inf.* xix. 90-97.

[1] *Par.* xxvi. 16-66.

[2] *De diligendo Deo*, cap. x. §§ 27-28.

divine union described by Plotinus, for which the soul prepares herself by stripping off everything. Thus purified the Vision of the One dawns upon her —the Vision which the soul cannot retain here, but to which she can retreat, as "a flight of the alone to the Alone": "This is the life of Gods, and of godlike and happy men." [1]

The most perfect grade of love, Bernard continues, cannot be attained even by the separated spirits of the blessed before the resurrection. And, in a famous passage, he speaks of the souls thus freed from the body, "utterly plunged into an immense ocean of eternal light and of luminous eternity," but still desiring and expecting the resurrection of the body for their perfection:—

"What now of spirits freed from their bodies? We believe them to be utterly plunged into that immense ocean of eternal light and of luminous eternity. But if, as is not denied, they would fain have received their bodies again, or certainly desire and hope to receive them, it is clear beyond question that they are not yet entirely transmuted from themselves, since it is admitted that there is still somewhat proper to themselves towards which, though it be but a little, their thought is deflected. Therefore, until death be swallowed up in victory, and the perennial light so invade the boundaries of darkness, and take possession of them on every side, that the

[1] *Ennead.* vi. 9, 11.

celestial glory shine forth even in the very bodies, the souls cannot utterly empty themselves and pass over into God, since they are even yet bound to their bodies, if not by life and sense, yet by natural affection, because of which they have neither the will nor the power to be consummated without them. And so, before the resurrection of the bodies, there cannot be that lapse of the souls into God which is their perfect and supreme state; nor, surely, would the spirit require the company of the flesh, if it could be consummated without it. Verily, not without profit to the soul is the body either laid down or resumed. *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints* (Ps. cxvi. 15). But if the death is precious, what is the life, and that life? Nor is it any marvel if the body, now of glory, seems to confer somewhat upon the spirit, since, even in its infirmity and mortality, it of a surety was of no small avail to it. O how true did he speak, who said that *all things work together for good to them that love God* (Rom. viii. 28)! To the soul that loveth God, the body availeth in its infirmity, availeth in its death, availeth in its resurrection; first, for the fruit of penitence, secondly for repose, thirdly for consummation. And rightly doth the soul not will to be made perfect without that which she feeleth hath, in every state, served her in good things." [1]

[1] *De diligendo Deo*, cap. xi. § 30. I have availed myself of some phrases in Mr. Wicksteed's rendering of this passage in the T. C. edition of the *Paradiso*.

St. Bernard interprets the beginning of the fifth chapter of the *Song of Solomon* with reference to this mystery of the resurrection of the body: *I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, O friends; drink; yea, drink abundantly, O beloved;* or: *be inebriated, O beloved*, as the Vulgate has it (Cant. v. 1). The invitation to eat is given to those still labouring on earth in the body; that to drink, to the disembodied spirits; but the *drink abundantly*, or *be inebriated, O beloved*, is addressed only to those who have resumed the body in glory. Until then, the wine of love is not unmixed, but the soul says: *I have drunk my wine with my milk:* "for the soul, even then, mixes with the wine of divine love the suavity of natural affection, with which she desires to resume the body and the body to be glorified." [1]

It is for this reason, in accordance with St. Bernard, and not (as Scartazzini suggested) that the speaker might himself refute what is said about the death of men and of beasts in the third chapter of *Ecclesiastes*,[2] that Beatrice's question, concerning the visible splendour of the body after the resurrection, is answered by Solomon in the fourth heaven:—

> "Ed io udi' nella luce più dia
> Del minor cerchio una voce modesta,
> Forse qual fu dall' Angelo a Maria,
> Risponder: 'Quanto fia lunga la festa

[1] *De diligendo Deo*, cap. xi. §§ 31-32.

[2] Eccles. iii. 18-22. Cf. Scartazzini, *Commento Lipsiese*, iii. p. 369; St. Gregory, *Dialogues*, iv. 4.

Di Paradiso, tanto il nostro amore
Si raggerà dintorno cotal vesta.
La sua chiarezza seguirà l'ardore,
L'ardor la visione, e quella è tanta,
Quanta ha di grazia sopra il suo valore.
Come la carne gloriosa e santa
Fia rivestita, la nostra persona
Più grata fia per esser tutta e quanta.
Per che s'accrescerà ciò che ne dona
Di gratuito lume il Sommo Bene;
Lume ch'a lui veder ne condiziona;
Onde la vision crescer conviene,
Crescer l'ardor che di quella s'accende,
Crescer lo raggio che da esso viene.
Ma sì come carbon che fiamma rende,
E per vivo candor quella soperchia,
Sì che la sua parvenza si difende,
Così questo fulgor, che già ne cerchia,
Fia vinto in apparenza dalla carne
Che tutto dì la terra ricoperchia;
Nè potrà tanta luce affaticarne,
Chè gli organi del corpo saran forti
A tutto ciò che potrà dilettarne.'
Tanto mi parver subiti ed accorti
E l'uno e l'altro coro a dicer: Amme;
Che ben mostrâr disio dei corpi morti;
Forse non pur per lor, ma per le mamme,
Per li padri, e per gli altri che fûr cari,
Anzi che fosser sempiterne fiamme." [1]

[1] " And I heard in the divinest light of the inner circle a modest voice, perchance such as was the Angel's unto Mary,

" Reply: ' As long as lasts the festival of Paradise, so long shall our love make radiate round us such a raiment.

" ' Its brightness shall follow our fervour, our fervour our vision, and that is as great as it hath grace above its natural power.

" ' When the glorified and hallowed flesh shall be resumed, our person shall be more blessed through being all and whole.

" ' Wherefore shall be increased that which the Supreme Good gives us of freely given light, light that conditions us for seeing Him;

" ' Whence the vision needs must grow, the fervour grow that

II

In the Letter to Can Grande, Dante refers to the *De Consideratione* of St. Bernard as one of his three authorities for the power of the human intellect to be so exalted in this life as to transcend the measure of humanity.[1] This work shows us Bernard both as reformer and as mystic. It was written in the closing years of his life, between 1149 and 1153, and dedicated to Eugenius III. "My love," writes the saint in the prologue, "does not regard you as my sovereign, but knows my son even in the papal robes."

There is a certain analogy between the conditions under which Bernard wrote the *De Consideratione* and those under which Dante composed, or, at least, completed, the *Divina Commedia*. It was written in the darkest time of Bernard's life. Even as Dante had based all his hopes upon the enterprise of Henry

is enkindled by it, the radiance grow that cometh from that fervour.

"'But even as coal that gives forth flame, and by its living brightness doth surpass it, so that its own appearance is maintained,

"'So this glowing, that already swathes us round, shall be exceeded in aspect by the flesh, which for this while the earth doth cover;

"'Nor shall so great a light have power to weary us, for the organs of the body shall be strong for all that can delight us.'

"So swift and ready seemed to me both the one and other choir to say *Amen*, that well they showed desire of their dead bodies;

"Perchance not only for themselves, but for their mothers, for their fathers, and for the others who were dear, before they became sempiternal flames."—*Par.* xiv. 34-66.

[1] *Epist.* x. 28.

of Luxemburg, and had seen it come to a miserable end; so had Bernard exulted in the second Crusade, had urged it on by pen and word, only to witness its utter failure, and to find that Europe held him primarily responsible. The work contains an impassioned *apologia*, which may well have struck a like chord in Dante's heart:—

"We have fallen upon evil days, when the Lord, provoked by our sins, seems to have judged the world in some sort before its time, with justice, indeed, but forgetful of His mercy. He hath not spared His people, nor His own name. Do not the heathen say, *Where is now their God* (Ps. cxv. 2)? And no wonder. The sons of the Church, and they who are called by the name of Christians, lie low in the desert, slain by the sword or consumed by famine. *Contempt is poured forth upon princes, and the Lord hath caused them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way* (Ps. cvii. 40). *Destruction and misery are in their ways* (Rom. iii. 16); fear and affliction and confusion in the hearts of the kings. How confounded are *the feet of those that bring good tidings, that publish peace* (Isa. lii. 7). We said peace, and there is no peace; we promised good things, and, lo, disorder; as though we had used rashness and levity in that undertaking. We ran together in that race, not as at an uncertainty, but at thy bidding—nay, at God's, through thee. Why, then, did we fast, and He did not look upon us? Why did we humble our souls,

and He took no heed? For, in all these things, His anger is not turned away, but His hand is still outstretched. How can He still patiently hear the voices of the Egyptians blaspheming, for that *he craftily brought them out, that he might kill them in the desert* (Exod. xxxii. 12)? And yet the judgments of the Lord are true: who knoweth it not? But this judgment is an abyss so great, that I seem to myself not wrongly to pronounce him blessed who shall not be scandalised in it." [1]

The *De Consideratione* is composed of five books. In the first, starting from the necessary occupation of the pope with secular things, "unwillingly torn from the embraces of his Rachel," Bernard deplores the increasing absorption of the Roman Curia with purely worldly cares, and the growth of a carnal spirit in the hierarchy, which is turning the Church into a den of thieves. In the second, he distinguishes four points of consideration: thyself; the things below thee; the things around thee; the things above thee; and, under the first heading, admonishes Eugenius concerning the fearful responsibilities and terrible dignity of his position. The third book considers the things beneath the pope: the faithful, and the pope's duties towards them. Eugenius has

[1] *De Consideratione*, ii. 1, § 1. We remember that Dante's own ancestor, Cacciaguida, followed the Emperor on this Crusade, and was among those who "lie low in the desert, slain by the sword, or consumed by famine," and so came *dal martiro a questa pace* (*Par.* xv. 139-148).

succeeded to the heritage of the Apostles, not to possess or dominate, but to take care of it. He is to strive to gather all into the bosom of the Church, not to subject them to his power. The fourth book deals with what is around the pope, to wit, the Roman Court and the Roman People. Let Eugenius make the clergy of the Eternal City a model to those of the rest of the world, and attempt to reform the Roman People, of whom Bernard has the worst opinion. His whole treatment of the position and ideal of the Papacy presents curious and striking analogies with the *De Monarchia*. He protests against the growing pomp and worldliness of the great prelates of the Curia, the satraps as he calls them—the sheep of the pope's pastures who seem to him more like demons. Eugenius is the shepherd of wolves rather than of lambs. Peter never went in such attire as the pope, adorned with gems, robed in silk and gold, riding on a white horse, surrounded with soldiers: "In these things you are the successor, not of Peter, but of Constantine." Nevertheless, let him tolerate this for a while, as long as, even in his purple and gold, he does the work of a shepherd and preaches the Gospel. And, in a thoroughly Dantesque passage, the writer asks: "Why dost thou strive once more to employ the sword, which thou wast once bidden put up again into its sheath?"[1] An eloquent

[1] *De Consideratione*, iv. 3, § 7. But cf. the whole passage on the two swords.

chapter sums up the things that are required in a pope, giving a noble picture of the *papa angelico* of the mediaeval dream, such an ideal supreme pontiff as, in an actualisation of the *De Monarchia*, might lead the human race to eternal felicity in accordance with revelation.[1]

In the fifth and last book, Bernard turns to the consideration of the things that are above us: God and the Angels; in the contemplation of which the soul, a pilgrim and exile among lower and visible things, is restored to her native land.[2] The soul, scorning the use of the senses, by a wondrous excess of mind, can sometimes soar aloft like St. Paul to contemplate these sublime things. They can be investigated in three ways: by opinion, by faith, and by understanding. Understanding leans on reason, faith on authority, opinion examines only the similitude of the truth. Both faith and understanding possess certainty, but faith presents this certain truth *clausam et involutam*, understanding *nudam et manifestam;* for understanding is "the certain and manifest knowledge of invisible things,"[3] and becomes spiritual vision or intuition. Even so Dante:—

[1] *De Consideratione*, iv. 7, § 23.

[2] *Ibid.*, v. 1, § 1. *Sic considerare repatriare est.* Similarly, Dante's contemplative gaze, fixed upon Beatrice, becomes *pur come peregrin che tornar vuole* (*Par.* i. 51). Cf. too *Vita Nuova*, § 42, where Dante says of his thought: *E chiamolo allora "spirito peregrino," acciò che spiritualmente va là suso, e sì come peregrino, lo quale è fuori de la sua patria, vi stae.*

[3] *De Consideratione*, v. 3, §§ 5-6. Giovanni Gentile (*La Filosofia*, p. 133) suggests that these three ways or stages, *opinio*, *fides*, and

"Lì si vedrà ciò che tenem per fede,
Non dimostrato, ma fia per sè noto,
A guisa del ver primo che l'uom crede." [1]

In Bernard's explanation of the names and functions of the nine angelic orders, we find the spiritual structure of the *Paradiso*, the mystical part played by each order in assimilating created things to the Divine likeness; Dante, by a slight modification in the arrangement, harmonises and combines it with the scheme already enunciated by Dionysius. Bernard adopts the later of the two arrangements given by St. Gregory, that of the *Homilies*:—

"What, then, is meant by this distinction into grades? We think those are called *Angels* who are believed to be assigned singularly to individual men as guardians: *sent to minister*, according to the teaching of Paul, *for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation* (Hebr. i. 14); of whom our Saviour said: *Their Angels always behold the face of my Father* (Matt. xviii. 10). Set over these we think are the *Archangels*, who, conscious of divine mysteries, are only sent for very great and special causes. From these that great Archangel Gabriel was chosen to be sent to Mary, for that cause than which there could not be a greater. Above these we think are the *Virtues*, by

intellectus, correspond with Vergil, Beatrice, and Bernard himself in the *Divina Commedia*.

[1] "There what we hold by faith will be seen, not demonstrated, but known of itself even as the initial truth that man believes" (*Par.* ii. 43-45); that is, axiomatic truth, and particularly the law of contradictories. Cf. *Par.* vi. 19-21, and Mr. Wicksteed's note thereon.

whose command or work signs and prodigies are wrought among the elements, for the admonition of mortals. Therefore, perchance, it is that, when thou readest in the Gospels: *There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars;* thou hast a little after: *For the Virtues of the heavens shall be moved* (Luke, xxi. 25, 26);[1] those spirits, doubtless, through whom the signs are wrought. Higher than these we think the *Powers*, by whose virtue the power of darkness is repressed and the malignity of the air constrained, so that it cannot harm as it would, nor cause disease save for good. We think the *Principalities* set over these, by whose management and wisdom all principality on earth is set up, ruled, limited, transferred, diminished, and changed. We think that the *Dominations* so far excel all the aforesaid orders, that, in respect of them, all these others seem to be ministering spirits, and to them, as to their lords, are referred the operations of the *Virtues*, the wardenship of the *Powers*, the government of the *Principalities*, the revelations of the *Archangels*, the care and providence of the *Angels*. We think the *Thrones* have soared to a high place apart even from these, and they are called *Thrones* because on them God sits. Dost thou ask what I mean by this sitting? Supreme tranquillity, most calm serenity, peace which surpasses all understanding. Such is He who sits

[1] *Virtutes* is the Vulgate rendering of δυνάμεις, where the English Bible (A.V.) has: *The powers of heaven shall be shaken.*

upon the *Thrones*, the Lord of Hosts, judging all things with tranquillity, most calm, most serene, most peaceful; and such hath He made the *Thrones*, most like unto Himself. We think the *Cherubim* draw from the very fountain of wisdom, the mouth of the most High, and pour out the streams of knowledge upon all His citizens. Is not this that of which the Prophet spoke: *the stream of the river maketh the city of God joyful* (Ps. xlvi. 4)? We think that the *Seraphim*, spirits all aflame with divine fire, enkindle all things, that all its citizens may be burning and shining lights; burning with love, shining with knowledge." [1]

Dante, following Dionysius and Aquinas, reverses the relative positions of the Virtues and the Principalities; but, in other respects, the correspondence of his nine moving spheres with Bernard's description of the angelic orders is fairly close. Thus, in the first sphere, that of the Angels, the matters discussed, freedom of the will and broken vows, mainly concern the salvation of individuals. In the second sphere, corresponding with the Archangels, the great mysteries of the divine purpose in Roman history and the reason of the Incarnation are revealed. Even as the Principalities are those Angels "by whose management and wisdom all principality on earth is set up, ruled, limited, transferred, diminished, and changed"; so Carlo Martello, in the third sphere which is moved

[1] *De Consideratione*, v. 4, § 8.

by them, speaks of the need of correspondence with the heavens for the constitution of a state, and of the alteration and diminution of the principality of his own house through evil government.[1] The lives of Francis and Dominic, related in the fourth sphere, realised on earth the work of the Powers in repressing the powers of darkness. Even as when *the Virtues of the heavens shall be moved, then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven* (Matt. xxiv. 29, 30); so in the fifth sphere, the heaven swayed by the Virtues, Dante sees the great glowing image of the crucified Christ formed by the spirits of the warrior saints.[2] In the sixth sphere, that moved by the Dominations, appears the celestial Eagle, the emblem of the imperial authority which depends directly upon God: "We must consider in the Dominations," writes Bernard, "how great is the majesty of the Lord, at whose bidding empire is established, and of whose empire universality and eternity are the bounds."[3] The correspondence between the Thrones and the seventh sphere, that of the contemplatives, is sufficiently obvious, and it is here that the poet is overwhelmed by the terrible threatenings of divine vengeance to fall upon the unworthy pastors of the Church. Bernard says: "We must consider in the Thrones, how the Judge, whom no innocence need fear, sits upon them, who will not deceive and who

[1] *Par.* viii. 58-75, 94-148. [2] *Par.* xiv. 97-105.
[3] *De Consideratione*, v. 4, § 10.

cannot be deceived, for as He loves, so doth He see. His court is never closed; it is wondrous in tranquillity. *Let my sentence come forth from Thy presence* (Ps. xvii. 2); for in him in whom Love abides, error and perturbation are absent." [1] In the eighth sphere, which is assigned to the Cherubim, whose name denotes *plenitudo scientiae*, we have the outpouring of the divine light upon all the bands of the triumph of Christ, and the exposition of the theological virtues that relate immediately to God. Finally, in the ninth sphere, which corresponds to the Seraphim:—

" Al cerchio che più ama e che più sape "; [2]

Beatrice sets forth the whole angelic nature and its ministry, and explains creation as the work of the Divine Love. As Bernard puts it:—

" We must consider in those who are called Seraphim, how He loves who hath no cause of loving outside Himself, but who is, and who hates nothing that He has made; how He cherishes, draws, and embraces those whom He created to be saved; how His fire, consuming the sins of His chosen creature

[1] *De Consideratione*, v. 4, § 10. Cf. *Par.* ix. 61-63:—

" Su sono specchi, voi dicete Troni,
Onde rifulge a noi Dio giu 'cante,
Sì che questi parlar ne paion buoni ";

and Gregory, *Hom. in Evangelia*, ii. 34, § 10: " Throni quoque illa agmina sunt vocata, quibus ad exercendum judicium semper Deus omnipotens praesidet."

[2] " To the circle that loves most and that knows most."—*Par.* xxviii. 72.

and the straws of its ignorance, renders it purified for Himself and most worthy of His love." [1]

Passing beyond these spirits, Bernard says with the Bride in the Song of Solomon: *When I had a little passed by them, I found him whom my soul loveth* (Cant. iii. 4): "Who is it? No better answer can be given than *He who is*." This leads him on to the consideration of God in His Divine Essence, as it is revealed to Dante in the momentary ecstatic vision that hushes the solemn music of the *Paradiso*.[2]

"We know these things. Do we therefore deem that we understand them? Discussion doth not comprehend them, but holiness, if in any way what is incomprehensible can be comprehended. But unless it were possible, the Apostle had not said, that we *may be able to comprehend with all the saints* (Eph. iii. 18). The saints, therefore, comprehend. Dost thou ask how? If thou art holy, thou dost comprehend and know; if not, be so, and thou wilt know by thine own experience.[3] Holy affection makes the saint, and it is twofold: holy fear of God and holy love. Perfectly affected by these, the soul,

[1] *De Consideratione*, v. 4, § 10.
[2] *Ibid.*, v. 6-13.
[3] Cf. *Par.* i. 70-72:—

"Trasumanar significar *per verba*
Non si porìa; però l'esempio basti
A cui esperienza grazia serba."

And *Par.* xiv. 106-108:—

"Ma chi prende sua croce e segue Cristo,
Ancor mi scuserà di quel ch'io lasso,
Vedendo in quell'albor balenar Cristo."

as it were with her two arms, comprehends, embraces, clasps, holds, and says: *I held him, and would not let him go* (Cant. iii. 4). Fear corresponds to *depth and height*, love to *breadth and length*. For what is so much to be feared, as power which thou canst not resist; as wisdom, from which thou canst not hide? God could be less feared, did He lack either. But now needs must thou fear perfectly Him whose eye sees all things, whose hand hath power over all. What, again, is so much to be loved, as the very love by which thou lovest and by which thou art loved? Nevertheless, the union with eternity makes it more lovable; for, since it cannot pass away, it banishes all apprehension. Love then, perseveringly and sustainingly, and thou hast the *length;* extend thy love even to enemies, and thou holdest the *breadth*. Be also fearful in all solicitude, and thou hast apprehended the *depth and height*." [1]

And the book ends: "He is still to be sought, who is not yet found enough, nor can be sought too much; but He is sought more worthily, and found more easily, by prayer than by discussion. Therefore this is the end of the book, but not the end of our quest." [2]

III

St. Bernard appears to Dante in the Empyrean, the Celestial Paradise, as his final guide, taking the place

[1] *De Consideratione*, v. 14, § 30. [2] *Ibid.*, v. 14, § 32.

of Beatrice, as Matelda had done that of Vergil in the Garden of Eden, the Earthly Paradise. He represents the *consideratio* of his own book, which in the blessed becomes intuition, the loving contemplation or contemplative love, in which the eternal and unchanging life of the soul in the hereafter consists:—

" E il santo sene: ' Acciò che tu assommi
Perfettamente,' disse, ' il tuo cammino,
A che prego ed amor santo mandommi,
Vola con gli occhi per questo giardino;
Chè veder lui t'acconcerà lo sguardo
Più al montar per lo raggio divino.
E la Regina del cielo, ond'i'ardo
Tutto d'amor, ne farà ogni grazia,
Però ch'io sono il suo fedel Bernardo.'
Quale è colui, che forse di Croazia
Viene a veder la Veronica nostra,
Che per l'antica fama non si sazia,
Ma dice nel pensier, fin che si mostra:
Signor mio Gesù Cristo, Dio verace,
Or fu sì fatta la sembianza vostra?
Tale era io mirando la vivace
Carità di colui, che in questo mondo,
Contemplando, gustò di quella pace." [1]

[1] " And the holy elder: ' That thou mayst fulfil perfectly,' he said, ' thy journey, for which prayer and holy love have sent me,

" ' Fly with thine eyes through this garden; for the sight of it will prepare thy gaze more to mount through the divine ray.

" ' And the Queen of Heaven, for whom I burn utterly with love, will grant us every grace, because I am her faithful Bernard.'

" Even as is he, who perchance from Croatia cometh to behold our Veronica, who, because of its ancient fame, is not sated,

" But says in his thought, as long as it is shown: My Lord Jesus Christ, true God, now was Thy countenance thus fashioned?

" Such was I, as I gazed upon the living charity of him, who in this world, by contemplation, tasted of that peace."—*Par.* xxxi. 94-111.

"There is a place," writes Bernard himself, commenting upon the text, *The king hath brought me into his chambers* (Cant. i. 4), "there is a place where God is perceived as truly tranquil and at rest; the place not of a judge, not of a master, but of a bridegroom. It is to me a chamber into which entrance has sometimes been granted me. But, alas, rarely and for a brief while. I have felt on a sudden so great a confidence and joy arising in me, that it seemed to me as though I were one of those blessed ones, *whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sins are covered* (Ps. xxxii. 1). O place of true repose, in which the will of God is experienced as good and gracious and perfect! This vision does not terrify, but soothes; it excites no restless curiosity, but allays it; it wearies not, but tranquillises the spirit. Here is true repose. The God of peace makes all things peaceful, and to gaze upon that stillness is to be at rest." [1]

"'Figliuol di grazia, questo esser giocondo,'
Cominciò egli, 'non ti sarà noto
Tenendo gli occhi pur quaggiù al fondo;
Ma guarda i cerchi fino al più remoto,
Tanto che veggi seder la Regina,
Cui questo regno è suddito e devoto.'" [2]

[1] *Sermones in Cantica Canticorum*, xxiii. §§ 15-16. Cf. *ibid.*, *sermo* lxxiv., where he speaks of his own experience of the visitations of the Word-Bridegroom.

[2] "'Son of grace, this joyous existence,' he began, 'will not be known to thee by keeping thine eyes only down here at the base;

"But look upon the circles even to the most remote, until thou shalt see the Queen enthroned, unto whom this realm is subject and devoted.'"—*Par.* xxxi. 112-117.

Thus are we initiated into the spirit of Bernard's instruction to Dante, over which the ineffable presence of the Queen of Mercy presides. The vision that he now has of Mary, in the region of light surpassing all the rest of heaven in brightness, smiling upon the exultant Angels, "a beauty which was gladness in the eyes of all the other saints,"[1] recalls Bernard's own words of her, as the channel of the streams of grace, the sinner's ladder which not only touched, but "passed through the heavens and reached the fountain of living waters which are above the heavens"; and how she is clothed with the sun, as having penetrated the exceeding deep abyss of the Divine Wisdom and been plunged in the inaccessible light of that fire wherewith the prophet's lips are cleansed and the Seraphim kindled with love.[2] "There is nothing," writes Bernard, "which delights me more, but yet terrifies me more, than to have to speak of the glory of the Virgin Mother."[3] And the poet:—

"E s'io avessi in dir tanta divizia,
Quanto ad imaginar, non ardirei
Lo minimo tentar di sua delizia.
Bernardo, come vide gli occhi miei
Nel caldo suo calor fissi ed attenti,
Li suoi con tanto affetto volse a lei,
Che i miei di rimirar fe' più ardenti."[4]

[1] *Par.* xxxi. 118-135.

[2] *Sermo in Nativitate B. V. M.*, § 4; *De duodecim praerogativis B. V. M.*, § 3.

[3] *In Assumptione B. V. M., sermo* iv. § 5.

[4] "And if I had such wealth in speech as in imagination, I should not dare attempt to tell the least part of her loveliness.

"Bernard, when he saw mine eyes fixed and intent upon the glowing

Again, in the next canto, we find an echo of Bernard's own doctrines concerning grace and predestination. The contemplative, "assuming the free office of teacher," is answering Dante's perplexity as to why the little children should have different degrees of bliss in Paradise; since, having no free choice, they could not merit or demerit:—

"Dentro all'ampiezza di questo reame
Casual punto non puote aver sito,
Se non come tristizia, o sete, o fame;
Chè per eterna legge è stabilito
Quantunque vedi, sì che giustamente
Ci si risponde dall'anello al dito.
E però questa festinata gente
A vera vita non è *sine causa*
Intra sè qui più e meno eccellente.
Lo Rege, per cui questo regno pausa
In tanto amore ed in tanto diletto
Che nulla volontà è di più ausa,
Le menti tutte nel suo lieto aspetto
Creando, a suo piacer di grazia dota
Diversamente; e qui basti l'effetto." [1]

source of his love, turned his own with such affection towards her, that he made mine more ardent to gaze again."—*Par.* xxxi. 136-142.

[1] "Within the amplitude of this realm, no casual point can have place, no more than sorrow, or thirst, or hunger;

"For by eternal law is established whatsoever thou seest, so that justly is correspondence here by ring to finger.

"And therefore this swiftly-speeded band to the true life is, not without cause, here among themselves more and less excellent.

"The King, through whom this realm finds rest in so great love and in so great delight that no will can dare for more,

"By creating all minds in His own glad sight, at His own pleasure endows diversely with grace; and here let the effect suffice."—*Par.* xxxii. 52-66. The inspiration of ll. 55-57 is, perhaps, the sentence cited by Aquinas as Plotinus: *Justitia Dei est observatio legis aeternae in suis operibus* (cf. above, p. 82).

Expounding the text, *My beloved is like a roe or a young hart* (Cant. ii. 9), Bernard says that the Bridegroom "is said to leap as a fawn upon some, and to pass over others, according to the dispensation of grace, which in the present life is given to some, and not given to others, by the just, though secret, judgment of God"; in heaven, "according to the final and varying recompense of merits," as, on earth, simply according to His will.[1]

Dante again has recourse to Bernard's *dottrina* in his final vision of Mary, "the face which hath most likeness to Christ," where he beholds Gabriel with outspread wings singing his *Ave* before her. He poetically expands one of the homilies in praise of the Blessed Virgin, in which the saint interprets the name Gabriel as "strength of God," pointing out how he was found to be of such great excellence among Angels as to be deemed worthy of such a name and such an embassy:[2]—

> "'O santo padre, che per me comporte
> L'esser quaggiù, lasciando il dolce loco
> Nel qual tu siedi per eterna sorte,
> Qual è quell'angel, che con tanto gioco
> Guarda negli occhi la nostra Regina,
> Innamorato sì che par di foco?'

[1] *Sermones in Cantica Canticorum*, lxxiii. § 7, liv. § 7. With the statement about the loss of Paradise by unbaptised children, put by Dante on Bernard's lips (*Par.* xxxii. 82-84), cf. *op. cit.*, lxix. § 3; but elsewhere (*Tractatus de Baptismo*, cap. ii. § 6) Bernard declines to commit himself, in spite of Augustine, to so rigorous a doctrine: *Penes Deum est, non meum definire.*

[2] *De laudibus Virginis Matris*, homilia i. § 2.

Così ricorsi ancora alla dottrina
Di colui ch' abbelliva di Maria,
Come del sole stella mattutina.
Ed egli a me: 'Baldezza e leggiadria,
Quanta esser può in angelo ed in alma,
Tutta è in lui, e sì volem che sia,
Perch'egli è quegli che portò la palma
Giù a Maria, quando il Figliuol di Dio
Carcar si volle della nostra salma.' "[1]

Finally, Bernard thus summed up the ardent inspiration of his life: "Let us seek for grace, and let us seek it through Mary; for what she seeks, she finds; since she cannot seek in vain."[2] He now repeats his words in the sacred poem:—

" 'E drizzeremo gli occhi al primo amore,
Sì che, guardando verso lui, penetri,
Quant' è possibil, per lo suo fulgore.
Veramente (nè forse tu t'arretri
Movendo l'ali tue, credendo oltrarti)
Orando grazia convien che s'impetri,
Grazia da quella che può aiutarti;
E tu mi segui con l'affezione,
Sì che dal dicer mio lo cor non parti.'
E cominciò questa santa orazione."[3]

[1] " 'O holy Father, who for me dost endure being here below, leaving the sweet place wherein thou sittest by eternal lot,

" 'Who is that Angel, that with so great joy is looking into the eyes of our Queen, enamoured so that he seems of fire?'

" Thus had I recourse again unto the teaching of him who drew beauty from Mary, as from the sun the morning star.

" And he to me: " Exultancy and chivalry, as great as can be in Angel or in soul, all is in him, and we would have it so;

" 'For he is the one who bore the palm down to Mary, when the Son of God willed to laden Himself with our burden.' "—*Par.* xxxii. 100-114.

[2] *Sermo in Nativitate B. Virginis Mariae*, § 8. Cf. Moore, *Studies in Dante*, iii. p. 62.

[3] " 'And let us direct our eyes to the primal Love, so that, gazing

Similarly, in the passage already quoted from the end of the *De Consideratione*, having set forth all that can be conceived of God and divine things by consideration alone, Bernard says: "He is still to be sought, who is not yet found enough; but He is sought more worthily, and found more easily, by prayer than by discussion." [1] The wonderful prayer, *Vergine Madre, figlia del tuo Figlio*, though placed on Bernard's lips and verbally inspired, here and there, by what Bernard and others had written, is essentially the poet's own. Less subjective than the famous hymn of a somewhat similar kind, *Vergine bella che di sol vestita*, that closes Petrarca's book of lyrics (a canzone which has all the intimate revelation of a personal confession not intended for human ears), Dante's prayer has a sublimer flight, a more universal pleading.[2] The poet is but one of those on whose behalf the beloved Disciple "was chosen from upon the Cross for the great office"; [3] albeit the voice of generations of supplicating humanity to Christ's Mother and theirs, now finding utterance in his song, cannot drown his own individual

towards Him, thou mayst penetrate, as far as may be, through His glowing.

"'Nathless, lest perchance thou shouldst sink backwards, in moving thine own wings, thinking to advance, by prayer must grace be needs obtained,

"'Grace from her who hath power to aid thee; and do thou follow me with thine affection, so that from my speech the heart depart not. And he began this holy orison."—*Par.* xxxii. 142-151.

[1] *De Consideratione*, v. 14, § 32.

[2] *Par.* xxxiii. 1-39.

[3] *Par.* xxv. 113-114.

petition, his own particular heart-cry of love and longing:—

"Or questi, che dall'infima lacuna
Dell'universo infin qui ha vedute
Le vite spiritali ad una ad una,
Supplica a te, per grazia, di virtute
Tanto che possa con gli occhi levarsi
Più alto verso l'ultima salute;
Ed io, che mai per mio veder non arsi
Più ch'io fo per lo suo, tutti i miei preghi
Ti porgo, e prego che non sieno scarsi,
Perchè tu ogni nube gli disleghi
Di sua mortalità coi preghi tuoi,
Sì che il sommo piacer gli si dispieghi.
Ancor ti prego, Regina, che puoi
Ciò che tu vuoli, che conservi sani,
Dopo tanto veder, gli affetti suoi.
Vinca tua guardia i movimenti umani;
Vedi Beatrice con quanti beati
Per li miei preghi ti chiudon le mani." [1]

It has been well said: "The Sacred Humanity of Mary's Son gives our imagination a figure, wherein we can clothe that 'sense of God' which has been

[1] "Now this man, who from the lowest abyss of the universe even unto here has seen the states of spirits one by one,

"Beseeches thee, of grace, for power so much that he may be uplifted with his eyes higher towards the final blessedness;

"And I, who never burned for mine own vision more than I do for his, proffer thee all my prayers, and pray they fall not short,

"That thou mayst scatter from him every cloud of his mortality with thy prayers, so that the supreme joy may be unfolded to him.

"Further, I pray thee, Queen, who canst all that thou wilt, that thou preserve sound, after so great a vision, his affections.

"Let thy protection conquer human motions. See Beatrice and so many saints for my prayers are clasping their hands to thee."—*Par.* xxxiii. 22-39.

formed in our heart and intelligence." [1] And it is in like fashion that Dante embodies, in the human form of the Blessed Virgin herself, the mercy and tenderness that draws the soul "from the lowest abyss of the universe," to enter "through the ray of that high Light which in itself is true."

[1] Tyrrell, *The Faith of the Millions*, i. p. 310.

CHAPTER V

DANTE AND THE VICTORINES

I. The philosophical school of St. Victor's; Hugh of St. Victor; his *Didascalicon;* its ideal of wisdom similar to that of Dante in the *Convivio.* II. Correspondence between the mystical structure of the *Purgatorio* and Hugh's allegory of the City of Spiritual Life; his mysticism and theory of Contemplation. III. Richard of St. Victor. IV. His *De praeparatione animi ad Contemplationem,* or *Benjamin minor;* the Mountain of Self-Knowledge, the "Delectable Mountain," and the Mountain of Purgatory. V. Richard's *De Contemplatione,* or *Benjamin major;* the motions of the contemplative mind and the flight of birds; the grades and qualities of Contemplation; the failure of memory after ecstasy. VI. Richard's treatment of free will, and the place assigned by him to the Blessed Virgin in man's redemption, identical with the representation in Dante.

I

William of Champeaux, the chief exponent of realism at Paris, unable to withstand the brilliant attacks of Abelard, resigned his chair at Notre Dame in 1108, and took refuge in the convent of St. Victor, which lay in a suburb outside the city. Here he founded a school of philosophy and theology, deeply tinged by the mysticism in which he had found intellectual support and spiritual consolation, when worsted in the noisy disputations of the public schools. In 1113, when William was appointed bishop of Châlons-sur-Marne, St. Victor's was raised to an

abbey, under the rule of the canons regular of St. Augustine, and Gilduin of Paris, a favourite disciple of his, who had been confessor to King Louis VI. of France, was made the first abbot, and ruled the house for forty-two years. Especially during the lifetime of St. Bernard, who took a lively interest in the abbey, and indirectly influenced its teaching, the most severe monastic austerity prevailed within its walls, united to profound philosophical study of a conservative and reactionary type, in opposition to the rationalistic tendencies of the new scholasticism as represented by Abelard and his followers.[1] Although, for a while, in the lifetime of its second great mystic, St. Victor's seemed on the point of falling from its ideals, Jacques de Vitry could still write of it in the following century:—

"Even as the candle of the Lord set on a candlestick, it lightens to the knowledge of God and enkindles to charity, not only the neighbouring city, but even remote regions; like the pool near the sheep-market, and the laver of brass in the temple of the Lord, ministering the waters of purification to the scholars sojourning at Paris and to various folk flocking thither from all sides. This holy and most praiseworthy congregation of warriors in the camp of the Lord is the refuge of the poor, the consolation of them that mourn, the support of the weak,

[1] Cf. J. B. Hauréau, *Histoire de la philosophie scolastique*, i. pp. 423, 507-509; Richard of St. Victor, *Benjamin major*, ii. 2, ii. 9.

the restoration of the wearied, the uplifting of the fallen; a most peaceful harbour for scholars desiring to escape from the shipwreck of this world, to whom it opens the bosom of mercy, and, like a tender mother, cherishes and nourishes them on its lap." [1]

The earliest master of the school, Hugh of St. Victor, impressed the imagination of the later Middle Ages far more than any of his successors, and was usually regarded as the greatest thinker that the abbey produced. He was named the second Augustine, *alter Augustinus*, and Jacques de Vitry calls him " the lutanist of the Lord, the organ of the Holy Ghost." Legends circulated about his appearing after death, to declare that his soul was in Purgatory; according to one story, because he had yielded to vain glory; according to another, to do penance for having too easily made his delicate health an excuse for not practising the austerities enjoined by his rule. St. Thomas Aquinas quotes him about twenty times in the *Summa Theologica*, and, in one place, almost apologises for disagreeing with him, declaring that " the sayings of Hugh of St. Victor are those of a master, and have the force of authority." [2] St.

[1] *Historia Occidentalis*, cap. xxiv.: *De canonicis Sancti Victoris.* Besides Hugh and Richard, Peter Lombard (*Par.* x. 106-108), who was introduced to the abbey by St. Bernard, and Peter Comestor (*Par.* xii. 134), who died there in 1179, were associated with St. Victor's; but, not being mystics or ranking among its characteristic teachers, they hardly concern us here. The former curiously connects the Victorine school with the method of Abelard.

[2] *Summa Theologica*, II. ii., q. 5, a. 1, ad 1.

Bonaventura goes further. In his *De reductione Artium ad Theologiam*, he classifies theologians in accordance with the threefold interpretation of the Scriptures: the spiritual or allegorical, pertaining to faith; the moral or tropological, pertaining to morals; the mystical or anagogical, which is concerned with the union of the soul with God. To the first, the doctors must chiefly attend; to the second, the preachers; to the third, the contemplatives. The chief example of the doctors is Augustine, of the preachers, Gregory, of the contemplatives, Dionysius: "Anselm follows Augustine, Bernard follows Gregory, Richard follows Dionysius; for Anselm excelled in reasoning, Bernard in preaching, Richard in contemplation; but Hugh in all these." [1] The admiration thus expressed for him by Bonaventura, and the influence of his works upon the great Franciscan doctor, probably explain the special position assigned to Hugh in the *Paradiso*, in the second circle of teachers in the sphere of the Sun, where, after naming himself, the saint points out Hugh of St. Victor immediately after two early Franciscans, thus associating the man whose writings had taught him his doctrine with those who had been his models in the religious life:—

> "Illuminato ed Augustin son quici,
> Che fûr dei primi scalzi poverelli,
> Che nel capestro a Dio si fêro amici;
> Ugo da San Vittore è qui con elli." [2]

[1] *De reductione Artium ad Theologiam*, § 5.

[2] "Illuminato and Agostino are here, who were among the first

Hugh was a Saxon of noble family, the son of Count Conrad of Blankenburg, in whose castle at Hartingam he was born, probably in 1096.[1] He thus sprang from the same class in life as his older contemporaries, Abelard and St. Bernard. In his boyhood, he took the Augustinian habit in the monastery of St. Pancratius near Halberstadt, which he seems to have been compelled to leave owing to the disturbed state of the country. Coming to France, he entered St. Victor's between 1115 and 1118, and was appointed director of studies in the abbey in 1133, the previous holder of the office having been murdered at Paris. Hugh's personal charm, no less than his intellectual power, won him the hearts of all with whom he was brought into contact; St. Bernard, who survived him by more than twelve years, was among his friends and correspondents. After a comparatively brief but laborious life of teaching and writing, Hugh died at the age of forty-four, on February 11, 1141 (a year before the death of Abelard), with words seemingly of mystical achievement upon his lips: *Consecutus sum;* "I have attained." His last moments are described in an extant letter

barefoot poor friars that in the cord made themselves friends to God; Hugh of St. Victor is here with them."—*Par.* xii. 130-133.

[1] The theory (first advanced by Mabillon) that Hugh was a native of Ypres in Flanders is now to be regarded as disproved. Cf. A. Mignon, *Les origines de la scolastique et Hugues de Saint-Victor*, i. pp. 7-8. A good popular account of the Victorines, for English readers, will be found in R. B. Vaughan, *The Life and Labours of St. Thomas Aquinas*, vol. i., chapters xi. and xii.

from one of the canons, Osbert, who, as infirmarian of the abbey, was tending him. After he had received the Sacraments, holding the Crucifix closely embraced:—

"Sighing deeply, he at length, in the hearing of us all, uttered these words: *Into Thy hands, and into Thy power, Lord, I commend the spirit which Thou hast given me and which I have received from Thee.* When he had said this, he was silent, and, as the hour of death came on apace, he began to say to himself something, and, when I asked him what it was, he answered in a clear voice: *I have attained. What,* I said, *hast thou attained?* But he, by reason of his suffering, could say no more, and answered only: *May He receive my spirit.* Then, beating his breast, he called upon the blessed Mother of God, saying: *Holy Mary, pray for us;* and again, gathering strength, *St. Peter, pray for us.* After a little, he spoke to me, and said: *Whom of the Saints shall I invoke further?* And when I named St. Victor, he said: *St. Victor, pray for us.* He spoke these words, and was silent; the mouth of the just was closed, that had been wont to utter wisdom, and the tongue of the wise man, that had adorned it with knowledge, cleaved to the roof of his mouth. After this he survived for the space of an hour."[1]

In a curious autobiographical passage, Hugh says that not only internal and external quiet, research,

[1] *Hugonis de Sancto Victore opera omnia*, ed. Migne, i. coll. clxi.-clxiii.

and austerity of life, but even exile aids and stimulates the searcher after philosophical truth:—

"All the world is a place of exile to philosophers. It is a great beginning of virtue for the mind to learn by degrees, by exercise, first to change these visible and transitory things, that afterwards it may be able also to relinquish them. He is yet delicate to whom his native land is sweet. But he is already strong to whom every soil is his country, and he is perfect to whom the whole world is a place of exile. The first has fixed his love on the world, the second has scattered it, the last has quenched it. I have been an exile from my boyhood, and I know with what grief the mind sometimes deserts the narrow space of a poor cottage, with what liberty it afterwards despises marble dwellings and panelled ceilings." [1]

The work of Hugh from which this passage comes is the *Didascalicon*, also called the *Eruditio Didascalica*, from which the writer himself was sometimes named *Didascalus*, "the teacher." It is a kind of introduction to all branches of learning, showing the student how study is divided, and the spirit in which it is to be undertaken, and holds a place in the history of letters intermediate between the earlier mediaeval encyclopaedias, of Isidore of Seville and Rabanus

[1] *Eruditio Didascalica*, iii. 20 (*De exilio*). Cf. Dante (*De V. E.* i. 6): "Nos autem cui mundus est patria, velut piscibus aequor, quamquam Sarnum biberimus ante dentes, et Florentiam adeo diligamus ut, quia dileximus, exilium patiamur iniuste, rationi magis quam sensui spatulas nostri iudicii podiamus."

Maurus, and the *Convivio* of Dante. Like the *Convivio*, it has at times the personal note. Speaking, for instance, in the seventh and last book (on meditation), of the four things in which the beauty of creatures chiefly consists: position, motion, aspect, and quality; Hugh says:—

"If a man were sufficient to investigate these things, he would find in them the wondrous light of God's wisdom. And would that I could explore this as subtly, describe it as competently, as I can love it ardently. For it is a delight to me, exceeding sweet and joyous, frequently to treat of these things, wherein at once the sense is instructed by reason, the mind is delighted by sweetness, and the affection stirred by emulation; so that we are amazed with the Psalmist, and cry out in admiration: *O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all* (Ps. civ. 24); and again: *For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work; I will triumph in the works of thy hands* (Ps. xcii. 4)." [1]

It is in the same spirit that Matelda quotes the psalm *Delectasti* to Dante in the Earthly Paradise.[2] In the *Convivio*, the poet gives a similar thought a more mystical turn, making beauty the incentive that draws the human soul to union with God: "And because it is in the excellences of nature that the cause is revealed as divine, it comes that the human soul naturally unites herself with these in

[1] *Erud. Didasc.*, vii. 4. [2] *Purg.* xxviii. 76-81.

spiritual fashion, the more swiftly and the more strongly in proportion as they appear more perfect." And he adds: "And they so appear according as the soul's power of recognition is clear or impeded." [1] This is thoroughly in accordance with another passage in which Hugh says: "After the darkness of sin entered the soul, the eye of contemplation was quenched, so that it beheld nought, and the eye of reason became bleared, so that it saw doubtfully. Only the eye of the flesh remained in its clearness." [2] And, in another place, Hugh makes this power of recognition in the soul depend upon love: "For where charity is, there is clarity." [3]

In the *Didascalicon*, we find the same noble conception of philosophy as we have in the *Convivio*. The starting-point of both Hugh and Dante is the same: the saying cited by Cicero and St. Augustine as that of Pythagoras, to the effect that the seeker after fair truth should be called not the wise man, but the lover of wisdom.[4] Philosophy is thus, as Hugh says, "the love and the study and, in a certain manner, the friendship of wisdom":—

"This love of wisdom is the illumination of the understanding mind by that pure wisdom, and, in a way, the calling back and summoning of the mind to wisdom's self, in order that its study of the divine wisdom, and its friendship with the pure divine mind,

[1] *Conv.* iii. 2, 59-66.
[2] *De Sacramentis*, I. x. 2.
[3] *De Sacramentis*, II. xiii. 11.
[4] Cf. above, p. 51.

may be seen. Therefore this wisdom impresses the character of its divinity upon the soul, and leads her back to the strength and purity of her true nature. From this is born the truth of thoughts and speculations, and holy and pure morality of actions." [1]

Similarly, in the second canzone of the *Convivio*, Dante sings of his allegorical lady, Philosophy:—

> "Cose appariscon ne lo suo aspetto
> Che mostran de' piacer del Paradiso:
> Dico ne li occhi e nel suo dolce riso,
> Che le vi reca Amor com'a suo loco." [2]

"The *eyes* of wisdom are her demonstrations, by which the truth is seen most certainly; and her *smile* is her persuasions, in which the inner light of wisdom is revealed under a certain veil; and, in these two, that highest joy of blessedness is felt, which is the supreme good in Paradise." [3]

> "Sua beltà piove fiammelle di foco,
> Animate d'un spirito gentile,
> Ch'è creatore d'ogni pensier buono;
> E rompon come tuono
> L'innati vizi che fanno altrui vile." [4]

"Morality is the *beauty* of philosophy; for even as the beauty of the body results from the members, in

[1] *Erud. Didasc.*, i. 3 (*Quod studium sapientiae philosophia sit*).

[2] "Things appear in her aspect that reveal some of the delights of Paradise: I say, in her eyes and in her sweet smile, that Love brings them there as to his own place."—*Canz.* ii. 55-58.

[3] *Conv.* iii. 15, 13-20.

[4] "Her beauty rains down little flames of fire, animated by a gentle spirit, which is the creator of every good thought; and they shatter like thunder the innate vices that make men vile."—*Canz.* ii. 63-67.

proportion as they are duly ordered, so the beauty of wisdom, which is the body of philosophy, results from the order of the moral virtues, which make her give pleasure that may be perceived by the senses. And, therefore, I say that *her beauty*, to wit, morality, *rains down little flames of fire;* that is to say, right appetite, which is begotten in the pleasure of moral teaching; which appetite liberates us even from those vices which are natural to us, to say nothing of the others. And hence springs that felicity which Aristotle defines in the first of the *Ethics*, saying that it is *activity, in accordance with virtue, in a perfect life.*"[1]

II

The work to which Hugh of St. Victor chiefly owed his fame is a kind of sequel to the *Didascalicon*, entitled *De Sacramentis Christianae Fidei.* It is practically the first systematic mediaeval text-book of theology, and is divided into two parts, the first running from the Creation to the Incarnation, the second from the Incarnation to the general resurrection and the future life. Aquinas frequently cites it in the *Summa Theologica*, but there is no direct

[1] *Conv.* iii. 15, 115-131. The reference is to the well-known definition of happiness in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (i. 7). Dante's words, *Operazione secondo virtù in vita perfetta*, are a verbal rendering of the version of Aquinas in his commentary on the *Ethics* of Aristotle (lib. i. lectio 10): *Felicitas est operatio propria hominis secundum virtutem in vita perfecta* (*Opera*, tom. xxi. p. 23).

evidence of its having influenced Dante, who seems as a rule (but by no means without conspicuous exceptions) to prefer to take his speculative and positive theology from the Angelical Doctor himself.

On the other hand, Dante was probably influenced by Hugh's mysticism, though more by that of his great pupil Richard. The mystical aspect of the *Purgatorio*, according to which it represents the life of man, and, to some extent, its actual structure on the side of the sacred mountain, are at least closely analogous with two sermons in which Hugh contrasts Babylon with Jerusalem. Babylon is the life of sinners in the world; Jerusalem, in the anagogical sense, for him, as for Dante, signifies the celestial country, but, in the moral sense, the spiritual life, with which the *Purgatorio* allegorically in some sort corresponds.[1] The purification of the soul is the passage from Babylon to Jerusalem. Babylon is a city with gates and wall, and seven long squares or wide streets; the gate of entrance is birth; the gate of exit, death; the wall is the circumference of our world; the seven squares are the seven capital sins. Jerusalem, the city of spiritual life, is placed on the side of a hill, with steps mounting through it from gate to gate, by ascending which man is uplifted from earthly things and drawn nearer heavenly. Like Babylon, it has a wall, two gates, and seven

[1] *Sermones* xxxviii. (*de Babylone*) and xxxix. (*de civitate sancta Jerusalem*), *Opera*, iii. coll. 994-1002. Cf. Lubin, *op. cit.*, pp. 261-266.

squares. The wall of the city of spiritual life is discipline. The lower gate, by which man enters the city, is the Catholic Faith, and it corresponds to the gate of St. Peter at the entrance of Dante's Purgatory, on the threshold of which sits the Angel with the keys.[1] The seven squares, opposed to the seven squares of Babylon, are the seven virtues contrary to the seven capital sins; humility against pride, brotherly love against envy, peace against anger, spiritual joy against sloth, liberality against avarice, abstinence against gluttony, continence or chastity against lust. These clearly correspond with the seven terraces of Dante's mountain, in each of which the purgation of the soul from disordered love is thus transforming Babylon into Jerusalem, and the seven virtues take symbolical form in the seven Angels who guard the terraces. The Angel of the fourth terrace, who is usually called the Angel of Zeal, is also the spiritual joy of Hugh's allegory;[2] and in the fifth terrace, where avarice is purged away, Hugh's conception is modified by the poet's Franciscanism, in that, in the examples of the contrary virtue, poverty is placed before liberality.[3] Passing upward by the steps through the seven squares, the soul reaches the upper gate of the city of spiritual life, which is divine contemplation. "Whoso," says Hugh, "shall mount up by these

[1] *Purg.* ix. 76 *et seq.* [2] *Purg.* xix. 49-51.
[3] *Purg.* xx. 19-33. Cf. below, pp. 205, 206.

steps to the gate of contemplation, which is on the summit, placed as it were at the egress of this city, will spiritually mount above and surpass himself, so that he will become Israel from Jacob, Rachel from Leah," and so go forth to peace and liberty.[1] This upper gate may be represented by the last flight of steps in the *Purgatorio*, upon which Dante dreams of Leah and Rachel; when he has surmounted them, he is " beyond the steep and narrow ways," is declared free, and crowned and mitred over himself, as Vergil resigns his guardianship.[2]

More perhaps than St. Bernard, Hugh of St. Victor founded what was regarded as the orthodox science of mysticism. There is a mystical element even in his doctrinal works, which are coloured by what St. John of the Cross was to call the " science of love." Thus, in the *De Sacramentis*, speaking on the measure of loving God, Hugh writes:—

" Ascend whilst thou canst, as much as thou canst, whither thou canst not too much nor yet utterly. Let thine all be filled out of Him, albeit His whole cannot be contained by thine. He will fill thee utterly, and superabound in Himself. If the vessel fails not, the oil is enough. Thy heart is the vessel, His love is the oil. As long as thou hast the vessel, He ceases not to pour in the oil, and, when thou hast not a vessel more, He has still more oil." [3]

[1] *Loc. cit.*, col. 1002.
[2] *Purg.* xxvii. 64-142.
[3] *De Sacramentis*, II. xiii. 9. The allusion is to 2 Kings, iv. 3-6.

One of Hugh's most beautiful, purely mystical works, is the little *Soliloquium de arrha animae*, which he accompanied with a tender letter of dedication to the monks of the German convent of his youth. It deals in simple language with the mystical visitations of God to the soul in pledge of her espousals, a foretaste of the full possession of the Beloved which will be hers in the future.[1] Elsewhere, he writes: "The Bridegroom is God; the bride is the soul. The Bridegroom is at home, when He fills the mind through internal joy; He goeth away, when He withdraws the sweetness of contemplation." [2]

The more typical aspect of Hugh's mysticism is the way in which he constructs a ladder of various steps, by which the soul mounts up to the divine union. It has been noticed that, although he was well acquainted with the Dionysian writings, he does not base his mysticism on the doctrine of the three ways of purgation, illumination, and union.[3] He teaches that there are three kinds of spiritual speculation, corresponding to the three visions of the rational soul: cogitation, meditation, contemplation. In cogitation, the image of some thing is suddenly presented to the mind, either entering through the senses or rising up by memory. Meditation is the assiduous reconsidering of such a thought, the striving

[1] *Soliloquium de arrha animae* (*Opera*, ii. coll. 951 *et seq.*).
[2] *De amore Sponsi ad Sponsam*, *ibid.*, col. 987.
[3] Cf. Mignon, *op. cit.*, ii. p. 363.

to unravel what is involved, or by scrutiny to penetrate what is hidden. In meditation, there is a kind of struggle between ignorance and knowledge; the light of truth shines out in the midst of the darkness of error, but the carnal heart is like the green wood which will not readily take fire or burn with a smokeless flame. What meditation seeks, contemplation possesses. The mind becomes strengthened with the fire of love, and begins to burn with a stronger flame, to glow with a brighter light; soon all the darkness of perturbation vanishes, and the soul spreads herself out into the contemplation of truth. "Then, the whole heart being converted into the fire of love, God is verily felt to be all in all, since He is received with such intimate dilection, that, save Him, nothing is left to the heart even of itself." [1]

In a small special treatise, *De Contemplatione et ejus speciebus*, Hugh gives a more subtle division of the successive mystical grades. Here after meditation, soliloquy, and circumspection, comes ascent. Three, he says, were the ascensions of Christ: the ascent of the Mountain, the ascent of the Cross, the ascent to the Father. Ours are likewise three: in *act*, doing penance, whereby we conquer the devil, working justice, whereby we conquer the world, and mortifying our own will, which is victory over self; in *affection*, to perfect humility, to consummate charity, and to the purity of contemplation; in *understanding*,

[1] *In Ecclesiasten Homiliae, homilia* i. (*Opera*, tom. i. coll. 116-118).

whereby we ascend from the visible things of the world to the invisible things of our own spirit, and from these to the invisible things of God. The knowledge of God comes in five ways: from the creation of the world, from the nature of the soul, from knowledge of the divine speech, from the ray of contemplation, from the joy of most blessed vision. This fifth mode of the knowledge of God, which is the supreme kind of contemplation, is the most blessed vision that a few happy souls enjoy in the present life, in which, ravished by the excessive sweetness of the taste of the divine, they contemplate God alone. The soul is all illumined by the splendour of eternal light, constantly and perfectly hates sin, casts aside the world, abandons herself, and whole, alone, naked, and pure, utterly unites herself to the one God. This supreme contemplation, too, he divides into three kinds, to each of which the ascent is made through various grades, based for the most part upon Scriptural analogies, or, at least, upon the mystical interpretation of texts, especially those in which the number three plays a part. It ends on the same note as the *Soliloquium*, the union of the soul with her immortal Bridegroom. "There remaineth only the vision of God face to face, concerning which we shall then be able to speak fully, when we see Him as He is." [1]

[1] *Hugonis de Sancto Victore de Contemplatione et ejus speciebus*, in which, as Mignon (*op. cit.*, ii. p. 381) observes, "we find the entire

The Dark Night of the Soul.

(Paradiso XXVI. Botticelli.)

As far as these grades of ascent in contemplation find any correspondence in Dante's ascent through the spheres to the anticipation of the Beatific Vision in the Empyrean, they more probably came to him in the teaching of Richard. For the rest, Hugh's mysticism, as has been well shown and is, indeed, true of all the writers of this school, is in no respect pantheistic. It involves no real identification of the soul with God, no substantial absorption into the Divine; there is always the difference between the finite and the infinite; the most perfect contemplation here is not the intuitive vision in the hereafter.[1] It is not a continuous state, but a brief act:—

"*There was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour* (Rev. viii. 1). This silence is contemplation. Heaven is the soul of the just; wherefore Isaiah: *the heaven is my throne* (Isa. lxvi. 1); and the Psalmist: *the heavens declare the glory of God* (Ps. xix. 1). When, therefore, the peace of the contemplative life occupies the mind, there is silence in heaven; but, because it is not perfect in the present life, it is said to have been not for an hour, but for half an hour." [2]

And when, Hugh continues, the contemplative

synthesis of the ideas which were to fill the works of mystical theologians of the following centuries." It is not included in the collected editions, but was first published by Hauréau, *Hugues de Saint-Victor, nouvel examen de l'édition de ses œuvres* (Paris, 1859). The text is not reprinted in the latter's later edition, *Les œuvres de Hugues de Saint-Victor : essai critique* (Paris, 1886).

[1] Cf. Mignon, *op. cit.*, ii. pp. 388, 389.

[2] *Miscellanea*, vi. 2 (*De silentio animae contemplativae*). Cf. his *Allegoriae in Novum Testamentum*, iv. 13.

spirit feels within itself the fruit of eternal life, it must freely turn to the active life to succour others, and then return to its contemplation.[1] Thus, in the seventh sphere, St. Peter Damian descends the celestial ladder to speak with the poet:—

> "Giù per li gradi della scala santa
> Discesi tanto, sol per farti festa
> Col dire, e con la luce che m'ammanta";[2]

and, in the Empyrean, St. Bernard leaves his allotted place to fulfil Dante's instruction:—

> "Affetto al suo piacer, quel contemplante
> Libero offizio di dottore assunse."[3]

III

There is comparatively little known about the personality of Richard of St. Victor, whom Dante, unlike the majority of mediaeval writers, evidently regards as a much greater man than his master, Hugh. Indeed, while we have enough contemporary material, even apart from legend, to enable us to construct a fairly vivid portrait of the latter, almost the only anecdote of Richard is the curious fable that, while in the world, he wrote a letter in his own

[1] *Miscellanea*, iv. 128.

[2] "Down by the steps of the holy ladder have I descended so far, only to give thee welcome with my speech, and with the light that mantles me."—*Par.* xxi. 64-66.

[3] "Fixed still on his source of joy, that contemplative assumed the free office of a teacher."—*Par.* xxxii. 1-2.

blood to persuade a nephew of his to desert from St. Victor's, and afterwards confessed to Hugh, who bade him either restore his nephew or enter the order himself in reparation.[1] There is no record of his early life. Some time before 1140, he became an Augustinian canon at St. Victor's, and in the annals of the abbey he is described as *natione Scotus*, one *quem tellus genuit felici Scotica partu*[2]—which perhaps simply means that, like Erigena, he was an Irishman. He carried on his studies under Hugh, to whom he refers as the greatest theologian of the age,[3] and on the latter's death he took up his work. For more than thirty years, he went on producing treatises and commentaries, and exercised a wide influence as teacher and thinker throughout the Church. A curious testimony to his position is found in a letter from John of Salisbury to St. Thomas of Canterbury, in which it is suggested that the Bishop of Hereford (Robert of Melun), being a very vain man, might perhaps be flattered and won over from the king's side by a letter of remonstrance from some such scholar as the prior of St. Victor—whom we know in that year (1166) to have been Richard.[4] The last

[1] Brit. Mus., Add. MS. 33956, f. 41 (in a collection of *exempla*, probably made by a French Franciscan at the end of the thirteenth century). I am indebted for this reference to the kindness of Mr. J. A. Herbert.

[2] *Richardi a Sancto Victore opera omnia*, ed. Migne, pp. x., xi.

[3] *Praecipuus ille nostri temporis theologus* (*Benjamin major*, i. 4).

[4] *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. J. C. Robertson, vi. p. 20; also in *Joannis Saresberiensis opera*, ed. Migne, col. 186. A letter from the abbot Guarinus of St. Alban's to

years of his life were embittered by the struggle of the better part of the canons against the English abbot, Ervisius, who was destroying the old spiritual life of the abbey and wasting its possessions. In 1172, Ervisius was compelled to resign his office; and Richard, after presiding over the chapter that elected the new abbot, died on March 10th, in the following year.

Gifted with extraordinary insight into the secret workings of the spirit, and with a fervid Celtic imagination, Richard completed what Bernard and Hugh had begun, in building up the fabric of the Church's mystical theology. It is tempting to connect what seems his deliberate suppression of self, his repeated declaration that he knows nothing, by personal experience, of the ecstatic doctrine that he sets forth, with the supreme importance that he attaches to the virtue of humility as the very foundation of the spiritual life.[1] To Dante, at least, when he appears in the sphere of the Sun, Richard is indicated by Aquinas as a mystic of superhuman vision:—

Richard, thanking him for his kindness to his brother Matthew who has expatriated himself in France for the love of science, is in Du Boulay, *Hist. Universitatis Parisiensis*, ii. p. 304. Richard profoundly influenced mediaeval English mysticism, through Richard Rolle, the anonymous author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*, and Walter Hilton. Cf. my introduction to the *Cell of Self-Knowledge*, pp. xii.-xvii.

[1] Cf. *Benjamin major*, v. 1, v. 19; *Explicatio in Cantica Canticorum*, capp. xx., xxix.; *De missione Spiritus Sancti*, col. 1027; *De eruditione hominis interioris*, ii. 32. His beautiful *De quatuor gradibusviolentae Charitatis* seems to imply direct personal experience.

" Vedi oltre fiammeggiar l'ardente spiro
D'Isidoro, di Beda, e di Riccardo
Che a considerar fu più che viro." [1]

Similarly, in the Letter to Can Grande, " Richard of St. Victor in his book on Contemplation " is cited as the chief modern authority for the power of the human intellect to be so exalted in this life as to transcend the measure of humanity.[2] There has been some needless confusion as to the specific work and passage to which Dante here refers. Richard's doctrine of contemplation is chiefly contained in two works: a smaller, *De praeparatione animi ad Contemplationem*, or *Benjamin minor*, in one book; and a larger, *De Gratia Contemplationis*, or *Benjamin major*, in five. The former starts from the mystical interpretation of the twelve children of Jacob in the book of Genesis, the latter from the symbolism of the mystical Ark of Moses in Exodus. The title *De Contemplatione*, or *Liber de Contemplatione*, is invariably given to the *Benjamin major* alone, and it is always referred to under this title by Aquinas.[3] I shall quote presently the particular passage that Dante evidently had in his mind.

[1] " See beyond flaming the ardent spirit of Isidore, of Bede, and of Richard who in contemplation was more than man."—*Par.* x. 130-132.

[2] *Epist.* x. 28.

[3] The manuscripts, *e.g.* the Brit. Mus., Add. MS. 15407 (a fine thirteenth-century codex), frequently entitle *Benjamin major* simply *Liber de Contemplatione*. The title *Tractatus de Contemplatione* is given to *Benjamin minor* by the Add. MS. 10433 (fifteenth century). Lubin, who, as already stated, identifies the *De Contemplatione* mainly with *Benjamin minor*, suggests that the whole symbolism of the family

IV

The *De praeparatione animi ad Contemplationem* is clearly an introduction to the *De Contemplatione.* Here Richard takes Benjamin as the type of contemplation, in accordance with the text in the Vulgate: *Ibi Benjamin adolescentulus in mentis excessu* (Ps. lxvii. 28), "There is Benjamin a youth in ecstasy of mind." [1] At the birth of Benjamin, his mother Rachel dies (Gen. xxxv. 18): "For, when the mind of man is rapt above itself, it surpasseth all the limits of human reasoning. Elevated above itself and rapt in ecstasy, it beholdeth things in the divine light at which all human reason succumbs. What, then, is the death of Rachel, save the failing of reason?" [2]

Richard shows how purity of heart and knowledge of self are the indispensable conditions for the mystical elevation. The soul is a mirror that reflects the invisible things of God, and it is by purity of heart alone that this mirror is made clear:—

"Therefore, let whoso thirsts to see his God, cleanse

of Jacob in the latter work finds analogies in the *Divina Commedia* (*op. cit.*, pp. 227-260); I am disposed to recognise it only in the correspondence between Dante's Matelda and Richard's Leah (see below, p. 270), and think the influence of the *Benjamin minor* upon the sacred poem is in the direction indicated in the present chapter.

[1] The English Bible (A.V., Ps. lxviii. 27) has: *There is little Benjamin their ruler.*

[2] *Benjamin minor*, cap. lxxiii.

his mirror, purify his spirit. After he hath thus cleared his mirror, long and diligently gazed into it, a certain clarity of divine light begins to shine through upon him, and a certain immense ray of unwonted vision to appear before his eyes. This light irradiated the eyes of him who said: *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us; Thou hast put gladness in my heart* (Ps. iv. 6, 7). From the vision of this light which it sees with wonder in itself, the mind is wondrously inflamed, and inspired to behold the light which is above itself." [1]

To attain to this contemplation, there is a mountain first to be ascended; the " high mountain apart " of the Gospels. This mountain is knowledge of self:—

" If the mind would fain ascend to the height of science, let its first and principal study be to know itself. Full knowledge of the rational spirit is a great and high mountain. This mountain transcends all the peaks of all mundane sciences, and looks down upon all the philosophy and all the science of the world from on high. Could Aristotle, could Plato, could the great band of philosophers ever attain to it? " [2]

What are the relations between this mystical

[1] *Benjamin minor*, cap. lxxii.

[2] *Benjamin minor*, cap. lxxv. Cf. Shelley, *The Triumph of Life*: " Their lore taught them not this: to know themselves." The meaning of this passage of Richard is somewhat distorted in Hauréau, *Histoire de la philosophie scolastique*, i. pp. 513, 514, and in *Dict. of National Biography* (art. " Richard of St. Victor "), where the mountain is taken to be contemplation.

mountain of Richard's treatise, the "delectable mountain" of the opening canto of the *Inferno*, the ascent of which is barred by the three symbolical beasts, and that other mountain—the mountain of Purgation—which Dante climbs by another way under the guidance of Vergil?

The ingenious theory, first propounded by Vaccheri and Bertacchi, that the *dilettoso monte* is materially (so to speak) identical with the mountain of Purgation, the point of departure under Vergil's guidance being in the southern hemisphere no less than the point of return to the surface, has proved untenable.[1] It would rather seem that the relations of the one mountain to the other are, more or less, those of the Eagle of Dante's dream (*Purg.* ix.) to Lucia, and of Leah (*Purg.* xxvii.) to the Matelda of the Earthly Paradise. The *dilettoso monte*, "which is the source and cause of all joy," finds its realisation in the mountain of Purgation, on the summit of which "man is happy."[2] The first mountain is clearly the Holy Hill of the Psalmist, *the hill of the Lord*, into which *he that hath clean hands and a pure heart* shall ascend (Ps. xxiv. 3, 4)—the cleanness and purity that, when lost, can only be regained by the purgatorial pains. For the older commentators, the mountain

[1] Cf. G. G. Vaccheri and C. Bertacchi, *La Visione di Dante Alighieri considerata nello spazio e nel tempo*, pp. 70-76; E. Coli, *Il Paradiso Terrestre Dantesco*, pp. 204 *et seq.*

[2] *Inf.* i. 76-78; *Purg.* xxx. 73-75. Beatrice almost repeats the words of Vergil.

usually symbolises virtue; for the moderns, felicity.[1] I would here suggest that it primarily represents Richard's mountain of the Knowledge of Self. Unaided, and stained with sin, the soul cannot straightway attain to self-knowledge. *A te convien tenere altro viaggio*, "Needs must thou pursue another journey."[2] Dante must "cleanse his mirror, purify his spirit"—and the mountain of Self-Knowledge becomes the mountain of Purgation. Purity of heart and knowledge of self being the indispensable conditions for the mystical elevation, the quest of self-knowledge and the purification of the soul are practically one and the same.

At the very point at which Vergil and Dante are approaching the foot of the mountain of Purgatory, there is an obvious echo, though in another connection, of Richard's words about the philosophers: *Quid tale Aristoteles, quid tale Plato invenit, quid tanta philosophorum turba, tale invenire potuit?*—

> "'Matto è chi spera che nostra ragione
> Possa trascorrer la infinita via
> Che tiene una sustanzia in tre persone.
> State contenti, umana gente, al *quia*;
> Chè, se potuto aveste veder tutto,
> Mestier non era partorir Maria;
> E disiar vedeste senza frutto
> Tai, che sarebbe lor disio quetato,
> Ch'eternalmente è dato lor per lutto.

[1] Mr. Vernon (*Readings on the Inferno*, i. p. 8) aptly cites St. Augustine, *De Sermone Domini in Monte*, i. 1: "Si quaeritur quid significet Mons, bene intelligitur significare majora praecepta justitiae."

[2] *Inf.* i. 91.

Io dico d'Aristotele e di Plato,
E di molti altri.' E qui chinò la fronte,
E più non disse, e rimase turbato." [1]

We are irresistibly reminded, too, of the episode in the *Inferno*, where the pagan soul of Ulysses, who aimed at becoming "experienced of the world and of the vices of mankind and of their worth," and who had conceived so nobly of man's destiny, as born "not to live like brutes, but to follow virtue and knowledge," nevertheless beholds in vain, and to his own destruction, the "mountain dim with distance," that appeared to him the highest that he had ever seen.[2] The mountain is clearly the mountain of Purgatory, and Ulysses, in attempting to reach it in a fashion not willed "there where what is willed can be done," [3] is in the same position as Dante himself at the outset of the poem.

Again, Vergil himself, in the light of reason, knows something of the nature of the mountain:—

"Questa montagna è tale,
Che sempre al cominciar di sotto è grave,
E quanto uom più va su, e men fa male"; [4]

[1] "'Mad is he who hopes that our reason can traverse the infinite way that one Substance in three Persons pursues.

"'Abide content, race of men, at the *quia* [with knowing from the effect that it is so]; for, if you had been able to see all, there were no need for Mary to bring forth;

"'And you have seen such men desiring without fruit, whose desire would have been appeased, which is given them eternally for grief.

"'I speak of Aristotle and of Plato, and of many others.' And here he bowed his head, and said no more, but remained sorrowful."—*Purg.* iii. 34-45.

[2] *Inf.* xxvi. 112-142. [3] *Inf.* v. 23-24.

[4] "This mountain is such, that ever at the beginning from below it

but he cannot show his disciple the way to the summit, without aid from more enlightened spirits:—

" ' Or chi sa da qual man la costa cala, '
Disse il maestro mio, fermando il passo,
' Sì che possa salir chi va senz'ala? ' "[1]

More than this, in one place, his human philosophy is suffered to delay Dante's ascent, when he lingers with him to listen to the song of philosophic love on the lips of Casella, and receives, with him and the other souls, the rebuke of Cato:—

" Qual negligenza, quale stare è questo?
Correte al monte a spogliarvi lo scoglio,
Ch'esser non lascia a voi Dio manifesto." [2]

In almost the same words, in the passage already quoted, Richard writes: "Let whoso thirsts to see his God, cleanse his mirror, purify his spirit."

We find in Richard's mysticism, in an emphatic form, that leaning upon authority which is so characteristic of Dante. On this mountain of Self-Knowledge the soul will behold Christ transfigured—even as Dante will see Beatrice in the triumphal pageant of the Church on the summit of the mountain of Purgatory; but, nevertheless, Richard appeals to the Bible, as the supreme test of truth, the only sure

is irksome, and the more man mounts up, lo, the less it wearies him."—*Purg.* iv. 88-90.

[1] " ' Now who knows on which side the cliff slopes,' said my master, staying his steps, ' so that he can mount who goes without wings? "—*Purg.* iii. 52-54.

[2] " What negligence, what lingering is this? Run to the mountain to strip you of the slough, that lets not God be manifest unto you."—*Purg.* ii. 121-123.

guard that the mystic has against being deluded in his lofty speculations:—

"Even if you think that you have been taken up into that high mountain apart, even if you think that you see Christ transfigured, do not be too ready to believe anything you see in Him or hear from Him, unless Moses and Elias run to meet Him. I hold all truth in suspicion which the authority of the Scriptures does not confirm, nor do I receive Christ in His clarification, unless Moses and Elias are talking with Him." [1]

V

There is a beautiful and famous passage in the *Paradiso* where Dante compares the motion of the contemplative saints up and down the celestial ladder, in the seventh sphere, to the flight of birds at dawn:—

"E come, per lo natural costume,
Le pole insieme al cominciar del giorno
Si movono a scaldar le fredde piume;
Poi altre vanno via senza ritorno,
Altre rivolgon sè onde son mosse,
Ed altre roteando fan soggiorno:
Tal modo parve a me che quivi fosse
In quello sfavillar che insieme vanno,
Sì come in certo grado si percosse." [2]

[1] *Benjamin minor*, cap. lxxxi.

[2] "And as, according to their natural habit, the daws together at the break of day bestir themselves to warm their chilled pinions;

"Then some depart without returning, some turn again to whence they started, and others wheeling round abide:

"Such fashion seemed to me was here, in that glittering band that

This image was evidently suggested by a passage in a long chapter of the *De Contemplatione*, in which Richard of St. Victor points out that contemplation works in many ways, which may all be seen illustrated in the flight of birds:—

"The vivacity of the understanding in the mind of the contemplative with wondrous agility now goes and returns; now, as it were, wheels itself round; but now, as it were, gathers itself together, and fixes itself motionless. Verily, if we rightly consider, we see the image of this thing daily in the birds of the air. Thou mayst see some now soaring aloft, now sinking downwards, and often repeating the same modes of their ascent or descent. Thou mayst see others turning aside, now to the right, now to the left, and now swerving to this, now to that direction, advancing little or hardly at all, and renewing in many ways, again and again, the same changes of their moving to and fro. Thou mayst see others in great haste spreading themselves out into the distance; but soon, with the same swiftness, return whence they had started, and often do the same thing, continuing and prolonging by daily custom the same goings forth and returnings. Others one can see, how they wheel round, and how suddenly or how often they repeat the same or similar circlings, but now a little wider, now a little narrower, and always

came together, as soon as it smote upon a certain stair."—*Par.* xxi. 34-42.

return to the same spot. Others one can see, how, with tremulous and repeatedly beaten wings, they hover in suspense over one and the same place, and, by their continuous motion, fix themselves almost motionless, and do not depart from that place of their hovering, but abide long and closely at it, as though, by the accomplishing of their work and perseverance, they may truly seem to cry out and say: *It is good for us to be here* (Luke ix. 33). Surely, according to the exemplar of these similitudes, the flight of our contemplation is varied in many forms, and is shaped in various fashion according to the variety of persons and concerns." [1]

Dante has taken over Richard's image of the birds and its application to the contemplatives, but he has modified it by his own observation of the *natural costume* of one particular species of bird, and has further simplified it by going back to the ultimate source of the conception (either directly or through the medium of Aquinas). This is to be found in the Neo-Platonic doctrine, elaborated by Dionysius, concerning the three movements of an angelical mind or a contemplative soul: the circular, the direct, and the spiral, which the Latin translators of Dionysius render " the oblique "; when it strives to unite itself with God.[2] Aquinas (who quotes a portion of this

[1] *Benjamin major*, i. 5. Richard proceeds to work out the correspondence in considerable detail.

[2] *De Div. Nom.*, iv. 8-10.

passage from the *De Contemplatione*) is at pains to reconcile Dionysius with Richard, by showing that all the various kinds of motion that the latter sees in his birds, and attributes to the mind of the contemplative, can be reduced to the three recognised by the former; though he winds up by saying that "it is manifest that Dionysius describes the motion of contemplation much more sufficiently and much more subtly." [1]

We find in the *De Contemplatione* a whole system of mystical psychology, more or less analogous with that of the *Paradiso*. Richard shows how the mind passes upward through six kinds, or grades, of contemplation —two in imagination (in imagination and according to imagination, in imagination according to reason), two in reason (in reason according to imagination, in reason and according to reason), two in understanding

[1] *Summa Theologica*, II. ii., q. 180, a. 6, ad 3. Cf. *In librum beati Dionysii de Div. Nom.*, cap. iv. lectio 7 (*Motus angelorum et animarum quales sint*). The soul is moved in *circular* fashion when, turning from external things into herself, she is brought first to know herself, thence elevated to consider the uniform nature of the Angels, and then finally led to the Beautiful and Good which is God, whereby this circular motion is completed. She is moved *obliquely*, in so far as, according to her capacity, she is uniformly illumined to receive varied and multiform knowledge, passing by reason from one thing to another. The *direct* motion is when, from these multiform and various things, she ascends to the contemplation of them singly and unitedly. There is probably another echo of the Dionysian three movements where Dante depicts his own contemplative gaze on "the general form of Paradise," when he enters the Empyrean (*Par.* xxxi. 46-48):—

> "Sì per la viva luce passeggiando,
> Menava io gli occhi per li gradi,
> Mo su, mo giù, e mo ricirculando."

(above but not beside reason, above and seeming to be beside reason)—according as the objects of its contemplation are *sensibilia*, *intelligibilia*, *intellectibilia*. *Sensibilia* are "visible things, and perceptible by bodily sense"; *intelligibilia*, "invisible things, but comprehensible by reason"; *intellectibilia*, "invisible things, and incomprehensible to human reason." Gradually discarding imagination and reason, the object of the mind's contemplation becomes what is above reason and seems to be beside reason, or even against it.[1]

It will be remembered that the office of reason, in the sacred poem, does not cease when Beatrice replaces Vergil as Dante's guide. The poet has still to use "reason illumined by divine revelation, and uplifting itself to the contemplation of heavenly wisdom," which Richard finds symbolised by Rachel.[2] And likewise with the lower faculty of imagination.[3] In the first grades of contemplation, the understanding "uses reason and also imagination as an instrument, and sees as through a glass."[4] It is, however, indispensable to Dante's allegory that revelation, in the person of Beatrice, should be at his side from the lowest to the highest grade of his contemplative ascent. With this reservation, and speaking very broadly, an analogy can be traced between the nine moving spheres of the *Paradiso* and Richard's first

[1] *Benjamin major*, i. 6-7.
[2] Cf. *Par.* iv. 37-42, x. 46-48.
[3] *Benjamin minor*, cap. iv.
[4] *Benjamin major*, i. 6.

four kinds of contemplation, though they cannot be so distinctly separated from each other, the imagination still playing a part even in the high vision of the ninth sphere; the two grades of contemplation, in understanding of "invisible things, and incomprehensible to human reason," being represented by the two stages of Dante's experience in the Empyrean. In the consummation of his vision, we have the sixth kind of contemplation:—

"On this sixth and most worthy watch-tower of all contemplation, the mind exults and rejoices in truth, when, by the irradiation of the divine light, it knows and considers those things at which all human reasoning cries out. Such are almost all those that we are bidden believe concerning the Persons of the Trinity; for when human reason is consulted about these, nought else save what is contrary is seen." [1]

Again, Richard teaches that there are three qualities of contemplation, according to its intensity: qualities that are, perhaps, represented by Dante in the revelations of the Earthly Paradise, in the upward passage through the nine moving heavens, and in the crowning vision of the Empyrean, respectively. These are *mentis dilatatio*, an enlargement of the soul's vision without exceeding the bounds of human activity; *mentis sublevatio*, elevation of mind in which the

[1] *Benjamin major*, i. 6 *ad finem*. Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II. ii., q. 175, a. 3, and q. 180, a. 4.

intellect, divinely illumined, transcends the measure of humanity, and beholds the things above itself, but does not entirely lose consciousness of self; and, lastly, *mentis alienatio*, or ecstasy, in which all memory of the present leaves the mind, and it passes into an ineffable state of divine transfiguration, in which the soul gazes upon truth without any veil of creatures, not in a mirror darkly, but in its pure simplicity.[1]

Moses going into the midst of the cloud, and Aaron passing beyond the veil into the Holy of Holies, are types of the mind thus caught up in ecstasy. It is a state which memory cannot follow:—

"When, by excess of mind, we are rapt above or within ourselves unto the contemplation of divine things, not only are we straightway oblivious of things external, but also of all that passes in us. And, therefore, when we return to ourselves from that state of exaltation, we cannot by any means recall to our memory those things, which we have erst seen above ourselves, in that truth and clearness in which we then beheld them. Although we keep something thereof in our memory, and see as it were through a veil and in the midst of a cloud, we cannot comprehend nor recall the mode of our seeing, nor the quality of the vision. In a wondrous fashion, remembering we do not remember, and not remembering we remember, whilst seeing we do not behold,

[1] *Benjamin major*, v. 1-17.

and gazing we do not perceive, and understanding we do not penetrate." [1]

This is obviously the passage that Dante had in his mind in the Letter to Can Grande, where he invokes Richard's authority for his explanation of the opening lines of the *Paradiso* :—

> " Nel ciel che più della sua luce prende
> Fu'io, e vidi cose che ridire
> Nè sa nè può chi di lassù discende;
> Perchè, appressando sè al suo disire,
> Nostro intelletto si profonda tanto,
> Che retro la memoria non può ire." [2]

" To understand which things, we must know that the human intellect, when it is exalted in this life, because of its being co-natural and having affinity with a separated intellectual substance, is so far exalted that, after its return, memory fails, because it has transcended the measure of humanity." [3]

And, again, in the closing canto:—

> " Da quinci innanzi il mio veder fu maggio
> Che il parlar nostro, ch'a tal vista cede,
> E cede la memoria a tanto oltraggio." [4]

[1] *Benjamin major*, iv. 23.

[2] " In the heaven that receives most of His light was I, and I saw things which he who descends from there lacks skill and power to relate;

" Because, when it draws near to its desire, our intellect plunges in so deeply, that memory cannot follow in its wake."—*Par.* i. 4-9.

[3] *Epist.* x. 28.

[4] " Hence onward my sight was greater than our speech, which fails at such a vision, and memory fails at so great excess."—*Par.* xxxiii. 55-57. Cf. *S. Catharinae Senensis Legenda*, II. § 213: " I saw the hidden things of God which it is not lawful for any one in this life to utter,

VI

It is probable that Dante's direct acquaintance with Richard of St. Victor was mainly restricted to the two works already considered. Richard's other works, nevertheless, frequently contain passages that elucidate or illustrate the sacred poem—which, for the rest, is naturally more or less true of every great mediaeval thinker.

Dante translates the words of Aquinas: "As regards the proper act of the will itself, no violence can be inflicted upon it"; into the line:—

> "Chè volontà, se non vuol, non s' ammorza";

"For will, unless it wills, is not quenched."[1] And he thus formally enunciates the fundamental doctrine of free will, upon which his whole ethical system depends:—

> "Lo maggior don che Dio per sua larghezza
> Fêsse creando, ed alla sua bontate
> Più conformato, e quel ch'ei più apprezza,
> Fu della volontà la libertate,
> Di che le creature intelligenti,
> E tutte e sole, fûro e son dotate."[2]

for neither is the memory of so great power, nor can human words suffice fittingly to signify such high things; for whatever I might say would all be as clay compared to gold."

[1] *Summa Theologica*, I. ii., q. 6, a. 4; *Par.* iv. 76.

[2] "The greatest gift that God of His largesse made in creating, and the most conformed to His own goodness, and that which He most doth prize,

"Was the liberty of the will, wherewith the creatures of intelligence (Angels and human souls), both all and they alone, were and are endowed."—*Par.* v. 19-24.

The whole *Divina Commedia* is, in a sense, the story of the liberty of man's will, in time and in eternity. Nowhere shall we find a more sublime exposition of the dignity of free will, the conception that runs through the entire spiritual experience of the poem, from the lowest hell to the highest heaven, than in the *De statu interioris hominis* of Richard:—

"Among all the goods of creation, nothing in man is more sublime, nothing more worthy than free will. What, I ask, can be found in man more sublime, what more worthy, than that in which he was created in the image of God? Verily, liberty of the will hath the image not only of Eternity, but also of the Divine Majesty. How much nearer, beyond all else, think we that free will approaches changeless Eternity, and bears more expressly its image in itself, in this, that by no sin, by no misery, can it ever be destroyed nor even diminished? Wouldst thou behold the likeness of the Majesty in it, and perceive clearly how it is stamped with the image thereof? God neither has, nor can have, any superior, and free will neither endures, nor can endure, any dominion over it; for to inflict violence upon it, neither befits the Creator nor is in the power of the creature. Let all Hell, all the world, even all the hosts of Heaven, come together and combine in this one thing; they will not avail to extort a single consent from free will in anything not willed." [1]

[1] *De statu interioris hominis*, i. 3 (*de dignitate liberi arbitrii*).

Again, Richard's commentary upon the *Song of Solomon* is full of the same spirit of devoted confidence in the Blessed Virgin that we find in St. Bernard and in Dante. In one place he writes:—

"Since both Angels and saints have care for sinners, and succour them with merits and intercession, we must believe that the Blessed Virgin can avail as much in this as either, nay, that she is more powerful than any creature. What wonder is it, if the Blessed Virgin pours out the milk of reconciliation to sinners and of grace to the faithful, she who reconciled the world and brought forth Grace itself, nay, the very Fountain of grace which spreads through the world and reaches the very boundary thereof? . . . Her compassion comes to meet us more swiftly than it is invoked, and anticipates the needs of the wretched." [1]

Dante almost repeats these words:—

"Donna, sei tanto grande e tanto vali,
Che qual vuol grazia ed a te non ricorre,
Sua disianza vuol volar senz'ali.
La tua benignità non pur soccorre
A chi domanda, ma molte fiate
Liberamente al domandar precorre." [2]

And, in another place, Richard writes: "Through Mary, not only is the light of grace given to man on

[1] *Explicatio in Cantica Canticorum*, cap. xxiii.

[2] "Lady, thou art so great and hast such power, that whoso would have grace and hath not recourse to thee, his longing fain would fly without wings.

"Thy benignity not only succours him that asketh, but many times spontaneously anticipates the prayer."—*Par.* xxxiii. 13-18.

earth, but even the vision of God granted to souls in heaven." [1] Similarly, at the beginning of the *Inferno*, the Blessed Virgin sends Lucia, type of illuminating grace, to Dante's aid, when he is impeded in his ascent by the three beasts; and, at the close of the *Paradiso*, her intercession gains for him the anticipation of the Beatific Vision of the Divine Essence.

[1] *Op. cit.*, cap. xxxix.

CHAPTER VI

DANTE AND THE FRANCISCAN MOVEMENT

I. Dante and Joachim of Flora; the epoch of the Holy Spirit and the Everlasting Gospel; Joachim as prophet of the Franciscans and Dominicans; the alleged Joachism of the *Divina Commedia*. II. Dante's relations with the Franciscan order; Franciscan figures and episodes in the *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*. III. The general-ministry of St. Bonaventura; his rebuke of the degeneracy of the order, in life and in the *Paradiso*. IV. Dante and Ubertino da Casale; the *Arbor Vitae Crucifixae* and the *Divina Commedia*.

I

The great religious revival, inaugurated by St. Francis of Assisi, wrought a revolution in the spiritual life of the closing Middle Ages. To some extent, it brought not peace but a sword, setting loose mystical forces with which the official Church of the epoch was unable to cope, save by fruitless measures of repression. It had, naturally, a considerable influence upon the literature of the thirteenth and early fourteenth century in Italy. In the field of letters, as in that of art, it gave a new impulse, a quickened vitality, and a tendency, by the use of the vernacular, to address itself to the comprehension of the unlearned, to get more into touch with actual life. The *Laudes Creaturarum*, or *Cantico del Sole*, of St. Francis, which

has been well called a "sublime improvisation" rather than a purely literary composition, is among the earliest extant poems written in Italian;[1] and the *lauda*, the spiritual song in the vernacular, as contrasted with the *sequence*, the official Church hymn in Latin, culminated in the lyrics of Jacopone da Todi, whose death (in 1306) was almost contemporaneous with the beginning of the *Divina Commedia*. It is easy, and perhaps, in the light of the present enthusiasm for Franciscan studies, tempting, to overestimate both the general influence of Franciscanism upon Italian literature and its specific influence upon Dante. It was, when all is said, but one of several tendencies in the same direction. A leading Franciscan scholar has written that, without Francis, there would have been no Dante. It is safer to say that, without Francis, we should have had a different Dante. The *Divina Commedia*, profoundly coloured as it is by the conflicts of the century that preceded its birth, crowning as it does the whole vernacular poetry of the first epoch of Italian literature, could not fail to be touched in part by Franciscan ideals, and to reflect certain phases, certain aspects, of the great Franciscan movement, which already, when

[1] The *Cantico del Sole*, composed in 1225, is contemporaneous with the earliest lyrics of the poets of the Sicilian school (*e.g.* Giacomo da Lentino and Piero delle Vigne), before which vernacular poetry in Italy is mainly represented by such things as the *Salva lo vescovo Senato* and the *Ritmo Cassinese* (for which see Monaci, *Crestomazia*, pp. 9, 17).

Dante wrote, was taking a different course from what its founder had anticipated.[1]

To trace the connection of the *Divina Commedia* with the Franciscan movement, and fully to realise the aspect under which the Franciscans were presented to Dante's eyes, we must go back, beyond their founder, to the extraordinary mystic who appears in the sacred poem, the last named among the blessed of the fourth sphere: the abbot Joachim of Flora.

Joachim was born about 1132, at Celico near Cosenza. In early manhood he had been attached to the court of the Norman kings of Sicily, but was converted from the world during a journey to the East, by the sight of an outbreak of pestilence at Constantinople, apparently in 1158. Passing Lent in contemplation on Mount Tabor, he believed that, in the night before Easter Day, he had received a revelation concerning the inner meaning of the Scriptures. He returned to Italy, and devoted himself to the study of Holy Writ in the light of this revelation. After various vicissitudes, first as a free preacher to the people, then as a Cistercian monk and abbot, he broke away from the order, and founded a new and stricter branch of Cistercians at Flora, or Fiore, among the Calabrian mountains. Although a

[1] Cf. Paschal Robinson, *The Writings of St. Francis of Assisi*, p. xiii.; Anne Macdonell, *Sons of Francis*, p. 405; P. Michele da Carbonara, *Dante e San Francesco;* Umberto Cosmo, *Le mistiche nozze di frate Francesco con madonna Povertà;* Giovanni Mestica, *San Francesco, Dante, e Giotto.*

mystic of an ecstatic kind, he lived in touch with the affairs of the world, favoured by popes, supported by the Emperor Henry VI., consulted by King Richard of England, and acting as confessor to the empress, that *gran Costanza* whom Dante was to see in the *Paradiso*. He died in his abbey of San Giovanni at Fiore, on the Saturday before Passion Sunday, 1202, when the future St. Francis was twenty years old.[1]

Two years previously, that is, in 1200 (Innocent III. being then on the papal throne), Joachim had issued a kind of encyclical letter to the abbots and monks of his rule, directing them, in the event of his death, to submit his three chief works, the *Concordia novi ac veteris Testamenti*, the *Expositio in Apocalipsim*, and the *Psalterium decem chordarum*, together with his other writings, to the judgment of the Holy See. The promulgation of these works marks an epoch in the history of mediaeval religious thought.

"The knowledge of things past," wrote Joachim, "is the key of things to come." He disclaimed the title of prophet that even his contemporaries gave

[1] For Joachim's life and works, cf. *Acta Sanctorum*, May, tom. vii.; Tocco, *L'eresia nel medio evo*; Denifle, *Das Evangelium aeternum und die Commission zu Anagni*; Paul Fournier, *Études sur Joachim de Flore et ses doctrines*; and a paper by the present writer in *Franciscan Essays by Paul Sabatier and Others*. Joachim's three chief works were printed at Venice: the *Concordia novi ac veteris Testamenti* in 1519, the *Expositio* and *Psalterium* together in 1527. An important but unfinished work of his, *Super quatuor Evangelia*, or *Concordia Evangeliorum*, is extant, but still unpublished. I am preparing a monograph upon the whole subject of Joachim and the history of the doctrine of the Everlasting Gospel.

him, pleading that his gift was simply intuition, to enable him to interpret the Scriptures in reference to the future of the Church. There are three states of the world, corresponding with the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. The first is that of the Father, representing power and inspiring fear; the state from Adam to Christ, in which men lived according to the flesh, and " the people of the Lord were serving under the elements of this world, unable to attain the liberty of the spirit." In the second, the wisdom hidden through the ages was revealed in the Son, a state anticipated by the prophet Eliseus and lasting up to the writer's own time; a state in which men live between flesh and spirit, and in which we have the Church under the dispensation of the New Testament, " in liberty by comparison with the past, but not in liberty by comparison with the future." The third state will be that of the Holy Ghost, " not now under the disguise of the letter, but in the full freedom of the spirit ": a new dispensation in which there will be no need for disciplinary institutions, for men will live according to the spirit, and the letter of the Gospel will be made void and consumed by spiritual understanding. Already in part anticipated by St. Benedict, as the second state had been by Eliseus, the full development of the third state, its *praecellens claritas*, is to be expected towards the end of the world.[1] The spiritual teaching and religious dis-

[1] Cf. especially *Expositio in Apocalipsim*, ff. 5-6 (*de tribus statibus mundi*).

pensation of this third state, the epoch of the Holy Ghost, will be the Everlasting Gospel of which the seer of the Apocalypse spoke: *And I saw another Angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the Everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people* (Rev. xiv. 6). This Everlasting Gospel cannot be drawn up in writing, like the Old and New Testaments; it is simply the spiritual interpretation of the Gospel of Christ, from which it proceeds, changing its water to wine, to inebriate the elect; for the Gospel as given us by Christ and the Apostles was transitory and temporal, whereas what is signified by it is eternal.[1]

By a complicated system of forty-two generations of thirty years from Christ, Joachim calculated that this third state would probably begin about the year 1260: a number which he found mystically signified in the *three years and six months*, or *thousand two hundred and threescore days*, of the Scriptures.[2] This third epoch will be preceded by the reappearance of Elias and the coming of Antichrist. In it the regenerators and spiritual movers of men will be two new orders, living not according to the ordinary monastic rule, but in apostolic poverty, even as in

[1] *Psalterium decem chordarum*, ff. 259*v*., 260; and the passages from the *Concordia Evangeliorum*, cited by Denifle, *op. cit.*, p. 53, and Fournier, *op. cit.*, p. 17, n. 3.

[2] *Concordia novi ac veteris Testamenti*, ff. 12, 12*v*., 67*v*., 118. Cf. Judith viii. 4; Luke iv. 25; Rev. xi. 3, xii. 6.

the days of the Apostles, when *the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul* (Acts iv. 32). These are the two Angels that came to Lot in Sodom (Gen. xix. 1); the two witnesses who shall prophesy *a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth* (Rev. xi. 3), and combat *the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit*. Through these spiritual men the powers of evil will be overthrown, Roman and Greek will be united, the Jews converted, and this new state will abide to the end of the world, to the time of the manifest vision of God.[1]

Joachim's prophecy that two new orders would arise, to live in apostolic poverty and be the spiritual regenerators of mankind, seemed fulfilled in the appearance of the Friars Minor and Friars Preachers. One of these orders was to be of laymen, the other of clerics; and it will be remembered that, whereas St. Francis was never a priest and only one of his earliest followers had priest's orders, St. Dominic was a canon and the Dominican order was originally composed of canons regular. The Calabrian seer had calculated that the two orders would begin their work about the year 1260; but already, when he promulgated his doctrines in 1200, St. Francis (born in 1182) was eighteen years old, leading the bands of pleasure-seeking youths at Assisi, and St. Dominic (born in 1170) was about thirty, and a canon of Osma in

[1] *Expositio in Apocalipsim*, ff. 5*v*., 146-147; *Concordia novi ac veteris Testamenti*, ff. 76, 76*v*.

Spain. By one of the ironical chances of history, the occasion that first brought Francis and Dominic together, and originated their friendship, was the Council of the Lateran in 1215—the council which, while commending Joachim himself and praising his own order, condemned his teaching concerning the Blessed Trinity. It is probable, therefore, that Francis and Dominic first heard of the man, who was held to have foretold their mission, as one who had taught heresy on an essential doctrine of the Faith.

Nevertheless, the followers of both patriarchs were disposed to recognise themselves in Joachim's prophecy, although, as Professor Fournier points out, the passages upon which they chiefly relied came from the *Interpretatio in Hieremiam prophetam*, a later work erroneously attributed to the abbot.[1] Some, at least, of the Dominicans claimed that their order had been thus definitely foretold by the Abbot of Flora, whose own monks had hailed the fulfilment of his words when they welcomed the first Friars Preachers among them.[2] But it was among the Franciscans that the seed sown by Joachim fell upon

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 44-45. Cf. *Cronica fratris Salimbene*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, p. 640.

[2] Cf. Gerardus de Fracheto, *Vitae Fratrum* (*Monumenta ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum*, i.), ed. Reichert, p. 13. Similarly, Theodoricus de Appoldia, *Acta ampliora S. Dominici* (*Acta Sanctorum*, August, tom. i.), § 58. Gerardus wrote between 1256 and 1259, Theodoricus about 1288; Dante seems to have known the latter's work. For an amusing account of Dominican hostility towards Joachist prophecies, see *Cronica fratris Salimbene, ed. cit.*, pp. 239 *et seq.*, and G. G. Coulton, *From St. Francis to Dante*, pp. 155-158.

more congenial soil; and, in the violent dissensions that broke out in the order between the *relaxati*, who were known later as the "conventuals," and the *spirituales*, a section of the latter ranged themselves under the dead abbot's banner as "Joachists," fired by the notion that they were the "elect," the spiritual rulers of the new dispensation. Elias had reappeared in St. Francis, and Antichrist was already in the world in the person of Frederick II. We learn from Fra Salimbene, one of the weaker brethren in the Joachist faith, that the death of the emperor, in 1250, did not shake the convictions of the more stalwart among them, like Fra Gherardo da Borgo San Donnino, who was ready to find a substitute in Alphonso X. of Castile.[1]

The Joachist movement among the Friars Minor produced the famous *Introductorius in Evangelium Aeternum*, an introduction to the works of Joachim, of which the said Fra Gherardo was at least the principal author, and which was solemnly condemned by Pope Alexander IV. at Anagni in 1256. We only know its contents from the extracts made by the commission of three cardinals in their report to the pope. From these it appears that the Joachists went considerably beyond what Joachim himself had taught. It was a logical deduction from the latter that the interpretation of the Scriptures pertained only to the bare-footed friars of the new dispensation,

[1] *Cronica, ed. cit.*, p. 456.

and that the whole official system of the Church would be superseded and rendered void in a few years; but the *Introductorius*, if rightly reported, even maintained that, about the year 1200, the spirit of life went out of the Old and New Testaments, and that Joachim's own books—the *Concordia*, the *Expositio*, and the *Psalterium*—themselves constituted the three books of the Everlasting Gospel that were to take their place.[1]

The condemnation of the *Introductorius* seems to have been extended a little later to the works of Joachim himself, whose doctrines, save for his teaching on the Blessed Trinity as opposed to that of Peter Lombard, had hitherto escaped formal censure. But the official condemnation of Joachism was less potent than the logic of events. The fatal year, 1260, came, and, save for the processions of flagellants, nothing happened. To the gibe: "And thou also wast a Joachist"; Salimbene answered: "Thou speakest sooth; but, when Frederick died who was emperor, and the year 1260 passed, I entirely laid aside that doctrine, and I am disposed henceforth to believe nothing save what I see."[2]

St. Thomas Aquinas, in the *Summa Theologica*, without naming Joachim, controverts the theory that "there will be a third condition of things under

[1] The text of the *Protocoll der Commission zu Anagni* is edited by Denifle, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-142. But it is questioned whether this official report really represents what the Joachists taught.

[2] *Cronica, ed. cit.*, p. 302.

the Holy Ghost, when spiritual men shall be the rulers." He cites the text, *This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled* (Matt. xxiv. 34), as meaning that the New Law, "the estate of the faithful of Christ," will remain until the consummation of the world. "There cannot," he says, "be any more perfect state of the present life than the dispensation of the New Law, which succeeded to that of the Old, as the perfect to the imperfect; but the condition of the New Law varies according to places and times and persons, inasmuch as men are more or less perfectly possessed of the grace of the Holy Spirit." And he refers to the words of St. Paul, *the law of the Spirit of life in Christ* (Rom. viii. 2), as showing that the New Law is not only the law of Christ, but the law of the Holy Ghost likewise: "Wherefore we must not expect another law which is to be that of the Holy Spirit."[1] Elsewhere, he formally controverts Joachim by name; while cordially acknowledging his good faith and orthodox intention, he follows the decree of the Lateran Council in convicting him of unconscious heresy on the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity;[2] and he explicitly denies the claim, that Dante was to make on Joachim's behalf a few years later, that he was "endowed with the spirit of prophecy."[3]

[1] *Summa Theologica*, I. ii., q. 106, a. 4.

[2] *Opusculum* xx. (*In decretalem secundam*), *Opera, ed. cit.*, tom. xvi. pp. 307-309.

[3] *Commentum in Lib. IV. Sententiarum*, dist. xliii., q. 1, a. 3.

Are we, nevertheless, to regard the *Divina Commedia* as a work of the school of the Everlasting Gospel? Döllinger was, I think, the first who connected the sacred poem explicitly with the doctrines of the Abbot of Flora. "Dante was a Joachist, but after his own eclectic fashion, with the reservation which his favourite doctrine of the divine right and calling of the empire rendered indispensable."[1] Döllinger laid stress upon Joachim's position in the fourth heaven, as the only prophet recognised by the poet since the time of the Apostles:—

> "Il calabrese abate Gioacchino,
> Di spirito profetico dotato";[2]

and he argued that the prophecy of the *Veltro*, the deliverer to come, which in its various forms plays so important a part in the poem, refers to one of Joachim's orders of spiritual men who shall guide the Church in the third epoch.

The analogy undoubtedly exists, but it must not be pressed too far. Dante's *Veltro* "will not feed on earth nor pelf," and, in the life of Joachim's spiritual men, "no possession of earthly heritage will be acquired." The *Veltro* will hunt the she-wolf of avarice back to Hell, "thither whence envy first sent her forth," and Joachim's order similarly "will fight against all vices and will overcome them."[3] It is

[1] *Studies in European History*, trans. M. Warre, p. 96.

[2] "The Calabrian abbot Joachim, endowed with the spirit of prophecy."—*Par.* xii. 140-141.

[3] *Inf.* i. 103-105, 109-111; *Expositio in Apocalipsim*, ff. 175*v.*, 176.

clear that the work to be done by Dante's *Veltro*, in renovating the world and bringing back the Golden Age, is at least analogous with that of Joachim's spiritual order, in establishing the dispensation of love and liberty under the Everlasting Gospel. Traces of Joachism might possibly be recognised in the beautiful and mysterious apparition of the third garland of blessed spirits in the sphere of the Sun as a sudden revelation of the Paraclete, *vero isfavillar del santo spiro*, " true radiance of the Holy Spirit "; [1] and in the poet's yearning, in the seventh sphere, for grace to see the countenance of St. Benedict, the precursor, according to Joachim, of this epoch of the Holy Ghost.[2] But the new epoch that Dante foresees is essentially different from that of Joachim. In the latter, although Joachim in one place declares that the Church of Peter will not fail, but will be changed into greater glory and abide to eternity,[3] it is manifest that the official Church will be largely, if not entirely, superseded, and that there will be no more need of disciplinary institutions than in the Earthly Paradise, where man is crowned and mitred over himself; [4] whereas, in Dante's scheme of things to come, the existing Church will be purified and renovated by a return to her primal simplicity, and

[1] *Par.* xiv. 67-78.

[2] *Par.* xxii. 58-60. A passage in Joachim about the neglect of the Benedictine rule (*Expositio in Apocalipsim*, ff. 80*v*.-81) anticipates *Par.* xxii. 73-93.

[3] *Concordia novi ac veteris Testamenti*, f. 95*v*. Cf. Tocco, *op. cit.*, p. 470.

[4] *Purg.* xxvii. 139-142.

the ideal Empire will shine out in its full glory. The prophetic side of his poem takes its colour from Joachism, but his ideal regime remains that of the *De Monarchia*. In the mystical Rose of Paradise, where his vision is consummated in the Empyrean, there is no place left for a third dispensation; the blessed of the Old Testament and those of the Christian Law will equally fill the Celestial Garden:—

> "Or mira l'alto provveder divino,
> Chè l'uno e l'altro aspetto della fede
> Egualmente empierà questo giardino." [1]

It is hardly probable that Dante had any first-hand acquaintance with Joachim's writings. From the way in which the Calabrian abbot appears in the *Paradiso*, at the end of the cantos in which the work and lives of St. Francis and St. Dominic together have been exalted and rehearsed, we may gather that Dante regarded him mainly as the prophet of the movement that these two represent. For this, in spite of the repudiation by Aquinas, he had both Dominican and Franciscan authorities. I will speak presently of the further significance of the place held by Joachim in the *Paradiso*. It should, however, be noticed that Dante repudiates the prophetic vagaries in which the fancy of the later Joachists ran riot. Salimbene, for instance, even when disillusioned as to the theory that Frederick II. was Antichrist, was

[1] "Now behold the lofty providence divine, for the one and the other aspect of the Faith will equally fulfil this garden."—*Par.* xxxii. 37-39.

still more or less convinced that he must needs be the last Roman emperor, because a Sibyl was said to have prophesied that the Empire would end with him.[1] To Dante, also, Frederick (before the election of Henry of Luxemburg) is *ultimo imperadore de' Romani*, "the last emperor of the Romans"; but it was possibly a knowledge of this prophecy that made him promptly qualify his statement, by adding, *ultimo dico per rispetto al tempo presente*, "the last, I say, with respect to the present time."[2] And more explicitly, in the letter to the Italian cardinals, he denounces the *astronomi quidam et crude prophetantes*, "certain astronomers who crudely prophesy," who assert things to be necessary which men have perversely chosen by abuse of their free will.[3]

II

St. Francis had been dead nearly thirty-nine years when Dante was born in 1265. Of his first followers, Ruffino and Leo had still some six years to live; but they were to find no place in the sacred poem. St. Bonaventura, the poet's chief authority in Franciscan matters, was minister-general of the order — the seventh successor of the Seraphic Father. Illuminato, who had accompanied St. Francis in his mission to the Soldan, was still living as bishop of Assisi in 1280,

[1] *Cronica, ed. cit.*, p. 349. Cf. Coulton, *op. cit.*, p. 245.
[2] *Conv.* iv. 3, 38-40. [3] *Epist.* viii. 3.

when Dante was fifteen years old. In the poet's eyes, the life of St. Francis and his mystical marriage with the Lady Poverty are supremely significant, as being the first attempted return to the primitive ideal of Christianity that Christ had left to the world.[1] But no sooner was the Seraphic Father dead, than his friars had split upon the interpretation of his doctrine of poverty. The one section, shielding themselves under what had at first been a reality, but was fast becoming a mere fiction, the official theory that whatever wealth was acquired by the order belonged to the Papacy and the friars were only the administrators or users, held that the precept was fulfilled in that they individually possessed no private property; the other declared that this was sheer apostacy, that all papal bulls and dispensations to the contrary were invalid, and that the true follower of St. Francis must not only possess nothing, even in common, but must cling to the *uso povero*, must use nothing save what was of the poorest kind, and necessary for bare existence. This penury, this real and absolute poverty alone, was synonymous with the life of Christ and the Evangelical spirit.

In the allegory of the triumph of Chastity, over the tomb of St. Francis at Assisi, which, in the happy days of pre-scientific art-criticism, we fondly supposed to be unquestionably by the hand of Giotto, there stands a figure of a layman in the garb of a Franciscan

[1] *Par.* xi. 64-66.

tertiary, which used to be shown as a portrait of Dante, although the resemblance with the better authenticated likenesses is of the slightest.[1] There is no reliable evidence of any such direct connection of the poet with the order. It seems tempting to interpret the cord with which he describes himself as girt in the *Inferno*, and with which he had thought to subdue the leopard which signifies lust, as that of the Franciscan rule; though the express statement of the fourteenth-century commentator, Francesco da Buti, that the poet actually became a Franciscan novice in his youth, but returned to the world before making his profession, is probably no more than a deduction from the episode of Dante taking the cord off and giving it to Vergil to cast into the abyss.[2] That he became a Franciscan tertiary in later life, at Ravenna, was first asserted in 1580 by Fra Antonio Tognocchi da Terrinca, on the authority of a passage in a work on the Franciscan province of Tuscany by Fra Mariano da Firenze, written in 1517, but no longer extant.[3] Dante was unquestionably laid to rest in the church of the Friars Minor at Ravenna;

[1] Cf. Mestica, *San Francesco, Dante, e Giotto*, i. § xii.; Berenson, *A Sienese Painter of the Franciscan Legend;* R. T. Holbrook, *Portraits of Dante*, pp. 126, 127.

[2] *Inf.* xvi. 106-114; Francesco da Buti, *Commento sopra la Divina Commedia*, i. p. 438, ii. p. 735. Cf. *Conv.* ii. 13, 46-49, iv. 28, 65-74, and F. d'Ovidio, *Studii sulla Divina Commedia*, pp. 307, 585.

[3] Mestica, *op. cit.*, i. §§ x.-xi. The only surviving work of Fra Mariano appears to be his *Compendium chronicarum ordinis Fratrum Minorum*, published in the *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, and separately (Quaracchi, 1911).

but it is difficult to harmonise Fra Mariano's statement, that he was buried in the Franciscan habit, with that of the poet's contemporary, Giovanni Villani, that he was buried "in the garb of a poet and a great philosopher."

Dante describes himself as following Vergil in Franciscan fashion in the eighth circle of the *Inferno*:—

> "Taciti, soli e senza compagnia,
> N'andavam l'un dinanzi e l'altro dopo,
> Come frati minor vanno per via."[1]

In his wanderings through Italy, the poet must often have encountered such friars. There was, at least in the days before his exile, many a man of mark among them, now walking barefoot and clad in the brown serge, who in the world:—

> "Fece col senno assai e con la spada";[2]

men like Marzucco degli Scornigiani, who had been governor of the Pisan portion of Sardinia, and Guido da Montefeltro, the most subtle politician and most skilful soldier of his day. But, with the exception of Fra Matteo d'Acquasparta, who is connected in so sinister a fashion with the events of his priorate and exile, there is no authentic record of any member of the order actually touching Dante's life. The curious tale of his encounter with a Franciscan inquisitor at Ravenna is not impossible in itself, but can hardly

[1] "Silent, alone and without company, we went on, the one in front and the other behind, as Friars Minor go along the way."—*Inf.* xxiii. 1-3.

[2] "Wrought much with wisdom and with the sword."—*Inf.* xvi. 39.

be regarded as authenticated history, although it is tempting to identify this friar with Frate Accorso de' Bonfantini, who wrote a commentary on the *Inferno*, which has not come down to us, and, in his capacity of inquisitor, handed over Cecco d'Ascoli to the secular arm.[1]

The only Franciscan in the *Inferno* is that Guido da Montefeltro of whom Dante had previously spoken with such enthusiastic praise, in the *Convivio*, as " our most noble Latin, Guido da Montefeltro," and whom he had there coupled with Sir Lancelot as a type of the noble soul returning to God in the last stage of life. " Verily, these noble men lowered the sails of worldly activities; for in their advanced age they dedicated themselves to religion, putting aside every mundane delight and work." [2] There are few more tragic things in literature than the virtual repetition of these words by Guido himself, in the tongue of fire that torments and conceals from view the givers of fraudulent counsel:—

" Quando mi vidi giunto in quella parte
Di mia etate, ove ciascun dovrebbe
Calar le vele e raccoglier le sarte,
Ciò che pria mi piaceva, allor m'increbbe,
E pentuto e confesso mi rendei;
Ahi miser lasso! e giovato sarebbe." [3]

[1] Cf. Wicksteed and Gardner, *Dante and Giovanni del Virgilio*, pp. 97-103.

[2] *Conv.* iv. 28, 59-65.

[3] " When I saw myself come to that part of my age, in which each should lower the sails and gather in the ropes,

" That which before pleased me, then gave me grief, and, repen-

The whole episode is one of the most dramatic in the *Divina Commedia;* perhaps the only one in which we find depicted that interaction of character which is so constant in Shakespeare, but which, naturally, as a rule finds no place in Dante's scheme. If historical (and it is now certain that the story is not the poet's own invention),[1] the interview between Guido and Boniface must have been in reality more subtle and complex; there would have been more discussion, more mutual action and reaction, before the old warrior-friar's resolution was overcome, and, seduced by the pope's promise of absolution in advance, he uttered the fatal words of evil counsel—*lunga promessa con l'attender corto*—whereby the pontiff learned "how to cast Palestrina to the earth." As we read it here, it is merely Guido's own agonised recollection of the final touch that led him to his eternal ruin.[2] It has been pointed out by Padre Michele da Carbonara, the devoted Capuchin friar who combined the cult of Dante with his spiritual ministrations to the Italian troops in Africa, that Dante, as it were, convicts Guido out of the mouth of St. Francis himself:—

tant and confessed, I dedicated myself; alas woe's me, and it would have availed."—*Inf.* xxvii. 79-84. In this, as in the corresponding passage from the *Convivio*, I have adopted Mr. Vernon's "to dedicate oneself" for *rendersi*, which means "to enter a religious order."

[1] See especially the article by E. G. Parodi in the *Bull. della Società Dantesca Italiana*, N.S., xviii. fasc. 4.

[2] *Inf.* xxvii. 100-111.

" Francesco venne poi, com'io fui morto,
Per me; ma un de' neri Cherubini
Gli disse: 'Non portar; non mi far torto;
Venir se ne dèe giù tra' miei meschini,
Perchè diede il consiglio frodolente,
Dal quale in qua stato gli sono a'crini;
Ch'assolver non si può chi non si pente,
Nè pentere e volere insieme puossi,
Per la contradizion che nol consente.'
O me dolente! come mi riscossi,
Quando mi prese, dicendomi: 'Forse
Tu non pensavi ch'io loico fossi.' " [1]

There is a striking analogy between this passage and the picture given by St. Francis, in his letter *To all the Faithful*, of the death of the rich man, who has put his affairs in order, is professedly repentant, but still one " that trusteth in man ":—

" But let all know that wheresoever or howsoever a man may die in criminal sin, without satisfaction, when he could satisfy and did not satisfy, the devil snatches his soul from his body with such violence and anguish as no one can know except him who suffers it. And all talent and power, learning and

[1] " Francis came then, as soon as I was dead, for me; but one of the black Cherubim said to him: 'Bear not away; do me not wrong;

" 'He must come down among my menials, because he gave the fraudulent counsel, since when till now I have been at his hair;

" 'For he cannot be absolved who doth not repent, nor can one repent and will together, through the contradiction that admits it not.'

" O woe's me, how I reawakened, when he seized me, saying to me: 'Perchance thou didst not think that I was a logician.' "—*Inf.* xxvii. 112-123. I have again followed Mr. Vernon in rendering *mi riscossi*, " I reawakened," *i.e.* " my eyes were opened to my delusion in having put faith in that false absolution " (*Readings on the Inferno*, ii. p. 409).

wisdom, that he thought to possess, are taken from him." [1]

Although there are no Franciscans to be found in the seven terraces of Purgatory, we hear of several who had died shortly before the assumed date of the vision, and who are presumably already in Paradise: *lo buon Marzucco*, "the good Marzucco" degli Scornigiani, already mentioned, who stayed for a while the murderous factions of Pisa over the dead body of his son; Pier Pettinagno, the Sienese comb-seller and Franciscan tertiary, whose holy prayers have brought Sapia Saracini through the gate of Purgatory; and Piccarda Donati, *che tra bella e buona non so qual fosse più*, already joyously exulting in her crown in high Olympus.[2] It is in accordance with the spirit of St. Francis that Dante makes liberality altogether subordinate to voluntary poverty as the virtue contrary to avarice; [3] and, in the terrace where the capital sin of avarice is purged away, two passages are fittingly based upon the very words of the Apostle of Poverty:—

> "Noi andavam con passi lenti e scarsi,
> Ed io attento all'ombre ch'io sentia
> Pietosamente piangere e lagnarsi;

[1] Paschal Robinson, *The Writings of St. Francis*, p. 107; *Opuscula S. Patris Francisci*, Quaracchi edition, p. 97. Cf. Michele da Carbonara, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-42.

[2] *Purg.* vi. 18, xiii. 124-129, xxiv. 13-18.

[3] *Purg.* xx. 16-33. The souls recite two examples of voluntary poverty (the Blessed Virgin and Fabricius) to one of liberality (St. Nicholas of Bari).

E per ventura udi': 'Dolce Maria':
Dinanzi a noi chiamar così nel pianto,
Come fa donna che in partorir sia;
E seguitar: 'Povera fosti tanto,
Quanto veder si può per quell'ospizio,
Ove sponesti il tuo portato santo.'" [1]

And St. Francis, in the letter already quoted, wrote: "The Word of the Father, so worthy, so holy and glorious, whose coming the most High Father announced from heaven by His holy Archangel Gabriel to the holy and glorious Virgin Mary, in whose womb He received the true flesh of our humanity and frailty, He, being rich above all, willed, nevertheless, with His most blessed Mother, to choose poverty." [2]

Again, Statius on his liberation greets Vergil and Dante with the words: *Frati miei, Dio vi dea pace*, "My brothers, may God give you peace"; and we read in the *Testament* of St. Francis: "The Lord revealed to me this salutation, that we should say: *The Lord give thee peace.*" [3]

Besides Piccarda, the only Franciscan with whom Dante speaks in the *Paradiso* is St. Bonaventura.

[1] "We were going on with slow and scanty steps, and I attent unto the shades that I could hear pitifully weeping and lamenting;

"And by chance I heard: 'Sweet Mary': in front of us so cried out amidst tears as doth a woman who is in labour;

"And continued: 'So poor wast thou, as can be seen from that hostelry, where thou didst lay down thy holy burden.'"—*Purg.* xx. 16-24.

[2] Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 99; *Opuscula, ed. cit.*, p. 88.

[3] *Purg.* xxi. 13; Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 84; *Opuscula*, p. 80; Michele da Carbonara, *op. cit.*, pp. 35, 40.

He learns from Piccarda of the *perfetta vita ed alto merto* of St. Clare; he sees Illuminato and Agostino accompanying Bonaventura in the sphere of the Sun; he hears from Aquinas the *mirabil vita* of the *poverello di Dio*, the seraphic lover of Lady Poverty, and the names of Bernardo, Egidio, and Silvestro, as the saint's first followers, and from Bonaventura the curt references to Matteo d'Acquasparta and Ubertino da Casale, the poet's own contemporaries, as vessels of dishonour; he looks at last upon the face of St. Francis himself in the Empyrean Heaven.[1]

III

The years between the condemnation of Joachism and the first appearance of Beatrice to Dante's eyes are occupied in Franciscan history by the general-ministry of St. Bonaventura, who ruled the order from February, 1257, until May, 1274, two months before his death. Elected minister-general in the place of the saintly John of Parma, who had been compelled to abdicate on account of his connection with the affair of the *Introductorius*, Bonaventura simultaneously proceeded sternly with the Joachists, sentencing Fra Gherardo and another to perpetual imprisonment, and issued an encyclical letter to all the provincial ministers and heads of houses through-

[1] *Par.* iii. 97-105, xi. 43-117, xii. 124-132, xiii. 31-33, xxxii. 35.

out the order, recalling the friars in the strongest language to the observance of the rule. In 1260, in his vain attempt (which lasted all his life) to heal the factions by imposing a *via media*, he had the so-called *Constitutiones Narbonenses* drawn up at the general-chapter of Narbonne: twelve rubrics based upon the twelve articles of the rule of St. Francis; and ordered all previous constitutions to be destroyed. A little later, with the same reconciliatory purpose, he wrote his own life (*Legenda*) of St. Francis, with such suppression of controversial names and details as might be supposed to make his presentation of their founder acceptable to both parties in the order; and the general-chapter of Paris, in 1266, decreed the destruction of all the earlier lives and legends. These, and the other disciplinary measures adopted by him, proved ineffectual, and it was only his own strong and saintly personality that prevented a schism in the order during his lifetime.[1] The *relaxati* were rapidly occupying the field, and the *spirituales*, with whom Bonaventura's own sympathies undoubtedly lay, were becoming a small and persecuted minority. Bonaventura himself declares that the friars of the new school, who control the order, regard the early Franciscans (Dante's *primi scalzi poverelli*) as a fable, instead of taking them as an example, and think themselves so much better than they as they less

[1] Cf. Paschal Robinson, in the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (art. "Bonaventure").

comprehend their virtues: "As long as they preserve some show of outer discipline in choir, in processions, and the like, they dare to assert that the state of the order has never been so good." [1] Pietro di Giovanni Olivi, who headed the spirituals in the years following Bonaventura's death, and who (unlike other members of the party) warmly defended his memory, writes: "He grieved so bitterly over the general laxity of this time, that at Paris in the full chapter, at which I was present, he said that, since he had become general, he had perpetually longed to be ground into powder, that the order might be brought back to the purity and intention of the blessed Francis and his companions." [2]

There is a striking contrast between the representation of Bonaventura by Dante and by one of the poet's contemporaries. Some time between 1322 and 1328, that is, within a few years of Dante's death, Fra Ugolino da Monte Giorgio, a Franciscan of the spiritual faction, wrote the *Actus beati Francisci et Sociorum ejus*—the book better known to most of us in its later Italian form as the *Fioretti di san Francesco*.[3] In the vision of Fra Jacopo della Massa, who "saw all the Friars Minor of the world in the vision of a tree, and knew the virtues and the merits and the

[1] *Determinationes quaestionum circa Regulam Fratrum Minorum*, pars i. q. 19 (*Opera*, tom. viii. pp. 349, 350).

[2] F. Ehrle, *Petrus Johannis Olivi, sein Leben und seine Schriften*, pp. 516-517.

[3] Cf. *Actus beati Francisci et Sociorum ejus*, ed. Paul Sabatier, preface.

vices of each," the deposed John of Parma is represented as the true follower of St. Francis, who had drunk the whole of the chalice of the spirit of life which the saint had offered to his lips, and Bonaventura, " who had drunk a part of the chalice given him and poured out a part," as a usurper. To him are given " claws of sharp steel, keen as the edges of razors," and he is only rendered powerless for evil by the intervention of St. Francis, whom Christ sends with a sharp flint to cut his claws.[1] Now in the twelfth canto of the *Paradiso*, written only a few years before the Latin original of the *Fioretti*, this terrible Friar Bonaventura follows Thomas Aquinas as Dante's teacher in the fourth heaven; a soul made beautiful in the divine love, to whose voice Dante turns as the needle of the compass to the north star;[2] and the *via media* which as minister-general he had striven to introduce into the order, and which to the author of the *Fioretti* seemed a pouring out of part of the spirit of life, is represented by the poet as the norm of religion to be followed by the true Franciscan.

[1] It is, however, doubtful whether this story is by Ugolino, as it is not found in the MSS. of the *Actus*. Cf. Sabatier, *op. cit.*, cap. 76. It is given in the *Historia septem tribulationum ordinis minorum* of Angelo Clareno (ed. F. Ehrle, pp. 279-281), written about 1325, and elsewhere. As the vision reappears in the *Fioretti* (cap. 48), the name of Bonaventura is suppressed. The sharp flint symbolises a personage well known to readers of the *Divina Commedia ;* the cardinal Ottobuono de' Fieschi, afterwards Pope Adrian V. (*Purg.* xix. 97-108); through whose intervention John of Parma was allowed to retire unmolested to Greccio.

[2] *Par.* xii. 28-33.

St. Bonaventura and the Order

Following his image of St. Francis as one wheel of the chariot of the Church, Bonaventura thus rebukes the degeneracy of the Franciscans of Dante's own days:—

"Ma l'orbita, che fe' la parte somma
Di sua circonferenza, è derelitta,
Sì ch'è la muffa dov'era la gromma.
La sua famiglia, che si mosse dritta
Coi piedi alle sue orme, è tanto volta,
Che quel dinanzi a quel di retro gitta;
E tosto si vedrà della ricolta
Della mala coltura, quando il loglio
Si lagnerà che l'arca gli sia tolta.
Ben dico, chi cercasse a foglio a foglio
Nostro volume, ancor troveria carta
U' leggerebbe: *Io mi son quel ch'io soglio;*
Ma non fia da Casal nè d'Acquasparta,
Là onde vegnon tali alla scrittura
Che l'un la fugge e l'altro la coarta."[1]

Although relating to a different epoch in the Franciscan story, the picture here given of the corruption of the order is vividly illustrated by the encyclical letter which Bonaventura, when elected

[1] "But the track, which the highest part of its circumference made, is deserted, so that there is mould where the crust once was.

"His household, that had moved straight with feet in his footprints, has so much turned round, that it casts him who is in front (the spiritual friar) upon him who is behind (the conventual);

"And soon shall be seen from the harvest how bad has been the tillage, when the tare shall wail that the barn be taken from it.

"I still grant that he, who should search leaf by leaf our volume, would yet find some page where he might read: *I am what I was wont;*

"But it will not be from Casale nor from Acquasparta, whence come such to our Scripture (the rule) that one evades it and the other draws it tighter."—*Par.* xii. 112-126.

minister-general, sent in 1257 to all the provincial ministers and heads of houses. He finds the cause of this degeneration in ten things: the multiplicity of business, whereby money is greedily sought and incautiously received; the laziness of some of the friars, who have chosen a monstrous state which is neither action nor contemplation; the wandering about of very many, which gives rise to scandal; their importunate begging of alms, so that they are dreaded more than robbers; the sumptuous character of their buildings; the familiar intercourse with women, which the rule forbids; the giving of office to untried and unspiritual friars; the greedy attempts to oust the parish clergy in the matter of burials and legacies; their troubling of the towns by constant and costly changes in their convents; and the general sumptuousness of their expenses. And here, as in the *Paradiso*, he admits that the true Franciscan still exists: "But although many may be found who are not guilty of any of these faults, nevertheless this curse involves all, unless those who do these things are resisted by those who do not." Protesting that it is not his intention to fetter them with new bonds, he concludes with an impassioned appeal that they should all help him to enforce the observance of the rule, to which they are solemnly vowed and without the fulfilment of which they cannot be saved.[1] But so ineffectual was his appeal that, in 1266, we find

[1] *Epistola* i., *Opera*, tom. viii. pp. 468-469.

him issuing another letter on the same subject to the provincial ministers, adjuring each, " by the shedding of the blood of Christ and by the marks of His passion in the holy body of our Father," to extirpate these pests with all the vigour of his soul, the attention of his mind, and the fervour of his spirit, and especially to enforce the true observance of poverty, " the sublime prerogative of our order." " For it is a horrible and impious lie for one to declare himself a voluntary professor of the highest poverty and yet to be unwilling to endure real penury, to abound with wealth within (the convent) and outside to beg like paupers." [1]

Dante, from the standpoint of 1300, makes Bonaventura cite Matteo d'Acquasparta as type of the relaxed friars or conventuals; but it is possible that the poet was led to judge him somewhat too severely, on account of his subsequent intervention in Florentine politics, as cardinal and legate of Boniface VIII.; for, during the two years, from 1287 to 1289, in which Matteo ruled the order as minister-general (the fourth in succession to Bonaventura), although he favoured the loosening of the *scrittura*, he did not persecute, but even protected Pietro di Giovanni Olivi, the head of the spirituals. Dante nowhere mentions Olivi; it is not he, but his disciple, Ubertino da Casale, who is here coupled with Matteo d'Acquasparta as type of the other extreme: the rigorist who would fain tighten

[1] *Epistola* ii., *loc. cit.*, pp. 470-471.

the rule that the conventual shuns.[1] And here the poet slightly shifts the historical perspective; for, whereas Olivi died in 1298, Ubertino did not become prominent as the leader of the spirituals until some years after the assumed date of the *Divina Commedia*. The reference to him, unlike that to Matteo, is thus by way of prophecy.

IV

Ubertino, a native of Casale in Monferrato, was about six years older than Dante, and had entered the Franciscan order in early boyhood. He had sat at the feet of John of Parma, had learned from him and from Olivi of the Joachist prophecies, and had been instructed in contemplation and in seraphic wisdom (the doctrine of Holy Poverty) by a certain Cecilia of Florence, of whom little is known, and by one dear to every reader of the *Divina Commedia*, Pier Pettinagno of Siena:—

"When I came to the province of Tuscany, I found the spirit of Jesus burning strongly in many men of virtue. Among whom a man full of God, Peter of Siena, a comb-seller, and a most devout virgin, Cecilia of Florence, so introduced me into the mysteries of Jesus that it would be a wondrous thing if the clearness of their spirit could be set down in words. For

[1] Cf. F. Tocco, *Quel che non c'è nella Divina Commedia*, p. 19.

that virgin, who now, together with the said Peter, reigns in heaven, instructed me in the whole process of the higher contemplation of the life of Christ. And in the company of these two great practisers of seraphic wisdom was the doctor of speculation and chief defender of the life of Christ, that brother so dear to God, Giovanni (*sic*) Olivi, who now, since his happy death, is reigning, as I hope, in heaven." [1]

Nevertheless, Ubertino tells us that, although he preached the pure doctrine of Christ from the pulpit of Santa Croce (between 1285 and 1289, when Dante, then engaged upon the poems of the *Vita Nuova*, may well have heard him), his private practice was totally different, and he lived comfortably in the convent, heedless of the divine knocking at the gate of his heart. From 1289 until 1298, he was teaching at Paris, still living laxly in the order; but in the latter year, returning to Italy, he fell under the influence of the Umbrian mystic, Angela of Foligno, who wrought in him a renovation comparable to that wrought by Beatrice in Dante in the *Vita Nuova* :—

[1] *Arbor Vitae Crucifixae Jesu*, Prologus i. Pier Pettinagno died on December 5, 1289. Ubertino's words imply that the pious and simple-hearted comb-seller was a far more significant figure among the Franciscan spirituals than the Sienese documents and legends would enable us to gather. They are an illuminating commentary to the lines placed by Dante on the lips of Sapia (*Purg.* xiii. 124-129):—

" Pace volli con Dio in su lo stremo
Della mia vita; ed ancor non sarebbe
Lo mio dover per penitenza scemo,
Se ciò non fosse che a memoria m'ebbe
Pier Pettinagno in sue sante orazioni,
A cui di me per caritate increbbe."

" She restored, yea, a thousandfold, all the gifts of my soul that I had lost through mine own sinfulness; so that, from that time, I have not been the same man that I was before. When I had experienced the splendours of her flaming virtue, she changed the whole face of my mind; and so drove out infirmities and langours from my soul and body, and renewed my mind that before was rent with distraction, that no one who had known me previously could doubt that the spirit of Christ was begotten anew within me through her." [1]

Ubertino now threw in his lot with the spirituals, to follow in the footprints of St. Francis and his first companions. Banished by his superiors to the mountain convent of La Verna, where his mystical father had received the Stigmata, he composed there, in 1305, the extraordinary book, the autobiographical prologue to which has just been quoted: *Arbor Vitae Crucifixae Jesu*, the " Tree of the Crucified Life of Jesus."

This somewhat enigmatical representative of the Franciscan spirituals is of greater significance to the student of Dante than the bare allusion to him in the *Paradiso* would imply; for the *Arbor Vitae Crucifixae* is the last of the literary sources of the *Divina Commedia;* the latest book in chronological order of which the influence can be traced in the sacred poem.[2]

[1] *Arbor Vitae*, Prologus i. Cf. F. Callaey, *Étude sur Ubertin de Casale*, pp. 19, 25.

[2] Cf. Kraus, *Dante, sein Leben und sein Werk*, pp. 444, 474, 479, 740; Davidsohn, *Geschichte von Florenz*, II. ii. pp. 275-277; Umberto

Imitated in part from the *Lignum vitae* of Bonaventura, it becomes an extraordinary medley of spiritual autobiography and mystical aspiration, of impassioned contemplation of the life of Christ and the Blessed Virgin, of the Joachist prophecies and the Franciscan legend, and an apocalyptic interpretation of contemporary history.

The last of the five books, into which the *Arbor Vitae Crucifixae* is divided, particularly concerns us; for here Ubertino restates the doctrines of the Abbot Joachim in the light of the events of his own day, and retells the story of St. Francis from the standpoint of the spiritual party. It was probably from this that Dante derived his conception of Joachim himself and what Joachist elements we find in the *Divina Commedia*, as also an essential portion of his panegyric of St. Francis in the *Paradiso*.

Ubertino divides the history of the Church into eight states, of which the sixth, like Joachim's third epoch, is that of " the renovation of evangelical life and the overthrowing of the antichristian sect, under the voluntarily poor who possess nothing in this life." This sixth state " began at the time of the seraphic

Cosmo, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-66; C. Huck, *Ubertin von Casale und dessen Ideenkreis ;* Callaey, *op. cit., passim.* The only complete edition of the *Arbor Vitae Crucifixae* is that printed at Venice in 1485. A portion of the fifth book, under the title *Tractatus Ubertini de Casali de septem statibus Ecclesiae,* was printed at Venice in 1516, appended to one of the apocryphal works bearing Joachim's name (*Expositio in librum beati Cirilli*); an Italian version of the fourth book, by Fra Lorenzo da Foiano, appeared at Foligno in 1564.

man Francis; albeit it will appear more fully in the damnation of the great harlot of Babylon," the *Ecclesia carnalis*. The seventh state, as far as it pertains to this life, "is a certain peaceful and wondrous participation of future glory, as though the heavenly Jerusalem were seen to have come down to earth," and it will begin with the slaying of Antichrist. The eighth state is the general resurrection at the Last Judgment.[1] Ubertino cites the authority of Bonaventura himself for identifying St. Francis with the Angel in the Apocalypse, *ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God* (Rev. vii. 2), and declares that he was prophesied by Joachim as the angelical man to come into the world at the beginning of the sixth state, or third epoch, singularly and manifestly to renew the life of Christ.[2] Although he knew the legends by Thomas of Celano and Bonaventura, Ubertino's chief sources for his picture of St. Francis are the traditions handed down from Friar Leo and the *Sacrum Commercium*, "the Holy Intercourse of blessed Francis with the Lady Poverty," the allegorical representation of the life of the saint written in 1227, the year after his death, by an anonymous friar who has not been identified with certainty, but who may possibly have been Giovanni Parenti, the first minister-general of the order after the founder's death. The whole spirit

[1] *Arbor Vitae*, lib. v. cap. 1, *Jesus prolem multiplicans.*
[2] *Ibid.*, lib. v. cap. 3, *Jesus Franciscum generans.*

of the *Sacrum Commercium* is reflected in the famous and beautiful prayer to obtain the grace of poverty, which Ubertino puts into the mouth of St. Francis himself.[1]

The apparent confutation of Joachim's prophecies, concerning the year 1260, presents no difficulty to his latest disciple. "Upon this number," he says, not without exaggeration, "Abbot Joachim founded all his revelations, and he was a man of great light and virtue." If we count, not from the Incarnation, but from the Crucifixion, it will bring us, not to the year 1260, but to the year 1294.[2] We must distinguish between the beginning and the end of this epoch, the third in the general history of mankind, the sixth in the history of the Church. It is only at the end that the reign of the Holy Spirit will be established; in the meanwhile, we must expect the temptation of the elect by the mystical Antichrist, the forerunner of the true and manifest Antichrist who will appear in the fulness of the epoch. In that year, 1294, "the horrible innovation of the rejection of Pope Celestine and the usurpation of his successor was brought upon the Church." Boniface VIII. is the mystical Antichrist, as shown by his cancelling his predecessor's

[1] *Arbor Vitae*, lib. v. cap. 3, *Jesus Franciscum generans.*

[2] *Ibid.*, lib. v. cap. 8, *Jesus falsificatus.* The difference is the thirty-four years of our Lord's life. Similarly, Dante indicates the year of his vision, not from the Incarnation, but from the Crucifixion; it is now *mille dugento con sessanta sei anni*, "one thousand two hundred and sixty-six years," since the earthquake, when Christ died on the Cross, shattered the arches of Hell (*Inf.* xxi. 112-114).

privileges to the spiritual Franciscans: " for he slew the spirit of Christ and His evangelical state, which, a little before, his predecessor Celestine by an authentic bull had bidden reflourish in the legitimate sons of Francis." The two witnesses, whom the Beast of the Apocalypse shall kill and whose bodies shall lie in the street of the great city (Rev. xi. 3-8), are the new Enoch and Elias, Dominic and Francis, who lie dead in the corrupt state of their sons. Unlike Dante, Ubertino has no harsh words for Celestine.[1] Nor does he share the poet's imperialist creed, but looks for the deliverance of mankind to the resurrection of the spirit of St. Francis from the sepulchre which Boniface thought to make sure, *sealing the stone and setting a watch* (Matt. xxvii. 66). We find, however, when he deals with the pontificate of Boniface, the same apocalyptic imagery as Dante employs. As for Dante, the place on the mystical chariot, which Beatrice first held, is usurped by the *puttana sciolta*, the woman of sin; so with Ubertino, the *woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet* (Rev. xii. 1), has become under a certain aspect (for he qualifies the identification) the *woman arrayed in purple and scarlet colour*, whose name is *Babylon the great* (Rev. xvii. 3-5).[2]

But Ubertino's attitude is more uncompromising than Dante's. Boniface is the *beast rising up out of*

[1] For Dante's treatment of Celestine, see appendix, i.
[2] Cf. *Inf.* xix. 106-111; *Purg.* xxxii. 148-150.

the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy (Rev. xiii. 1). One of his heads, the pride of his usurped authority, was *as it were wounded to death* (Rev. xiii. 3), by the proclamation of the two Colonna cardinals that he was not lawful pope. But *his deadly wound was healed, and all the world wondered after the beast* (Rev. xiii. 3). This represents the jubilee of 1300. The second beast, *coming up out of the earth*, who *had two horns like a lamb, and spake as a dragon* (Rev. xiii. 11), is the host of ambitious religious who had healed the wound by their preaching and proclaiming his legitimate authority, and who now brought all the world, with wondrous reverence, to receive his false indulgences.[1] Ubertino exults in the outrage committed upon Boniface at Anagni, and defends the action of the French king and his agents. Shifting his interpretation, in the way the Joachists affected, he declares that Boniface's successor, Benedict XI., is now the second beast coming up out of the earth: *And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed* (Rev. xiii. 12). His reputation for sanctity made him acceptable even to those whom the open wickedness of his predecessor had horrified, and his

[1] *Arbor Vitae, cap. cit.* This is in striking contrast with the reverential treatment of the jubilee by Dante (*Purg.* ii. 98-102), and by Jacopone da Todi, who was himself excluded from it (*Lauda* lvii., *Lo pastor per mio peccato posto m'à fuor de l'ovile*).

hypocrisy covered up the false title of both. The two complete the mystical Antichrist; they are the new Annas and Caiaphas, the one finishing what the other had begun, in slaying again the life of Christ in the poor friars.[1]

The *Arbor Vitae Crucifixae* was begun in March, 1305, during the vacancy of the Papacy after the death of Benedict, and finished in the following September, two months after the election of Clement V. Issuing from his retreat, we find Ubertino, in 1307, in the service of the papal legate in Tuscany, that Cardinal Napoleone Orsini whom, a few years later, Dante was to address in his noble letter to the Italian cardinals after the death of Clement.[2] At the Council of Vienne, Ubertino came forward as the defender of the memory of Olivi and the chief champion of the rigorist observance, and it was mainly due to his eloquence that the papal decision in 1312, expressed in the bull, *Exivi de Paradiso*, favoured the spiritual party and the strict interpretation of the rule of St. Francis. But, under John XXII., his position became intolerable, and, in 1317, he left the order—a noteworthy commentary upon the poet's words that the true Friar Minor, the page in the Franciscan

[1] Dante similarly refers to Boniface as *lo principe de' nuovi Farisei* (*Inf.* xxvii. 85), but nowhere names Benedict, who is implicitly exempted from the doom of his simoniacal predecessors in *Inf.* xix. There can be no question as to Benedict's genuine sanctity, which the poet undoubtedly recognised.

[2] *Epist.* viii. 10: *Tu prae omnibus, Urse.*

volume where one might read *Io mi son quel ch'io soglio*, "I am what I was wont," came not from Casale.[1] The pope gave him leave to enter a Benedictine monastery, but he seems to have remained at Avignon. This is the last page in his history of which Dante could have known. In 1322, the year after the poet's death, John—to whom he had referred as *tu che sol per cancellare scrivi*, "thou that writest but to cancel"[2]—reversed the policy of his predecessor, in his famous bull, *Ad conditorem canonum*, casting back upon the friars the property which they professed to hold merely as belonging to the Church. A year later, another decretal of his, *Cum inter nonnullos*, went further, declaring that the affirmation that Christ and the Apostles possessed nothing, neither in common nor in particular, was a heresy, thus condemning what the nobler spirits of the order regarded as essential to the ideal of Holy Poverty.[3] In 1325, Ubertino was accused of heresy in connection with the doctrines of Olivi; he fled from the papal court, and, apparently, joined Ludwig of Bavaria in his struggle with the Holy See. Nothing is known with certainty of his ultimate fate.

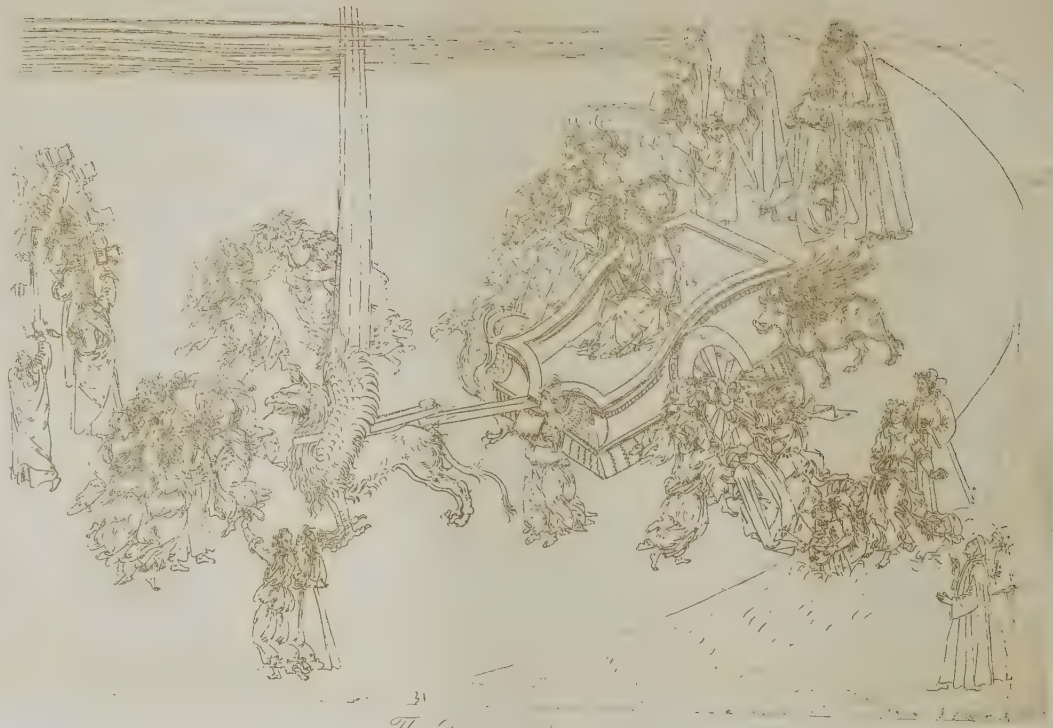
There remains a word to be said on the significance of Dante's application, by way of prophecy through Bonaventura, of the parable of the tares and wheat to the story of the Franciscan order.[4] The same

[1] *Par.* xii. 121-124.
[2] *Par.* xviii. 130.
[3] Cf. Callaey, *op. cit.*, chap. vii.
[4] *Par.* xii. 118-120.

image occurs in a bull of John XXII., issued in 1318, against the Fraticelli of Provence and Tuscany, and it has been suggested that the poet had this bull in mind, the "tares" being these extremists, and the "barn" the Church, or the order, from which they are to be cast out.[1] But it is naturally difficult to think that Dante would, even indirectly, associate himself with the persecution of men who were dying for what they believed the true Franciscan ideal; and the reference is more probably to the decree of the Council of Vienne in 1312, where, among other things, it is forbidden to the friars, as an abuse of the vow of poverty, to store up large quantities of corn in their granaries.[2] The "tares" are thus, as would be expected on the lips of Bonaventura, the conventuals, and, besides the literal sense of *arca* as the granaries forbidden, it may possibly in a secondary sense refer to the papal support, which was now for a while withdrawn from them.

[1] Cf. Raynaldus, *Annales ecclesiastici*, v. p. 102 (*Minorum fratrum sacer ordo*); Cosmo, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

[2] Cf. Tocco, *op. cit.*, p. 26; Callaey, *op. cit.*, pp. 152, 191. A further abuse was the sale of the corn thus collected from the faithful.



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The Grim Gaycant

(Purgatorio XXXII. Botticelli)

CHAPTER VII

DANTE, ST. FRANCIS, AND ST. BONAVENTURA

I. The imagery and symbolism of the fourth heaven; Dante's rendering of the life of St. Francis and the Mystical Marriage with Poverty; his Franciscan sources; the Bridegroom of Poverty and the Preacher of Justice. II. The corresponding panegyric of St. Dominic; its ultimate source; the place of St. Dominic in the sacred poem. III. St. Bonaventura's works, especially the *Itinerarium*, in relation with the *Divina Commedia*; Dante's characterisation of St. Bonaventura; the "left-hand care." IV. Dante's apotheosis of the Angelical and Seraphical Doctors; the two garlands of sempiternal roses.

I

Qui autem fecerit et docuerit, hic magnus vocabitur in regno caelorum. The special note of the music of the fourth heaven, the sphere of the Sun, seems struck in this sentence in the gospel for the feasts of the Doctors of the Church, from the Vulgate version of the Sermon on the Mount: *He that shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven* (Matt. v. 19). And the whole imagery of the glory of the great teachers is evidently suggested to Dante by Daniel and the Apocalypse: *And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever* (Daniel xii. 3); *There appeared a great wonder in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon*

under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars (Rev. xii. 1).[1] The latter text explains the number selected by Dante for each of the two groups of blessed spirits in which Aquinas and Bonaventura respectively appear; the repeated garlands of twelve celestial lights that encircle Beatrice, *la bella donna ch'al ciel t'avvalora*.[2]

Dante's choice of the sphere of the Sun for the lofty hymns of praise to Francis and Dominic, uttered by Aquinas and Bonaventura, seems based on the correspondence of the fourth heaven with the order of angelic intelligences that rules it, the Powers. According to St. Bernard, the Powers are those Angels "by whose virtue the power of darkness is repressed, and the malignity of the air constrained," and Dionysius had previously interpreted their name as signifying a certain ordering, both in reception of divine things and in action, whereby they lead those beneath them upwards.[3] Thus Dante conceives of Francis and Dominic as setting order upon the confused religious life of the Middle Ages, the two guides to bring the Bride to her Bridegroom, the two champions in the warfare against the powers of darkness, "at whose deeds, at whose speech, the people gathered who had gone astray."[4]

[1] The same imagery occurs in the *Diaeta Salutis* (cap. 50, *de Gloria Paradisi*). Cf. below, p. 255.

[2] *Par.* x. 93.

[3] *De Consideratione*, v. 4, § 8; *De Caelesti Hierarchia*, viii. 1.

[4] *Par.* xii. 44, 45.

There is an alleged vision, of Dominican origin, that (in addition to the Franciscan sources) may have had some slight influence upon the poet. This purports to have been revealed in spirit by St. Isidore of Seville to a Spanish hermit named Juan, during the lifetime of St. Francis and St. Dominic, and was incorporated into the legend of the latter saint in the second half of the thirteenth century.[1] The hermit sees a vision of Christ on the chariot of the Church, surrounded by the doctors and preachers; to the aid of the chariot appear St. Dominic, with six wings and his face of snow, and with a golden chain (wisdom) in his hand attached to one wheel, and St. Francis, also with six wings, whose face is like lightning, and who holds a cord of white, red, and green (the theological virtues) attached to the other wheel. By means of these, they make the chariot move with the utmost rapidity, from east to west, from north to south, in the twinkling of an eye. A dragon and many foxes assail the chariot, but the two saints crush the head of the one and put the other assailants to flight. Then, through the cupidity of religious and the avarice of prelates, Dominic's chain and Francis's cord are severed from the wheels, and presently we have the coming of Antichrist. There seem traces of this vision in the assaults upon the mystical car in the Earthly Paradise, and in the representation of Francis and Dominic as the two

[1] Theodoricus de Appoldia, *Acta ampliora S. Dominici*, §§ 373-382.

wheels of the chariot " in which Holy Church defended herself, and won in the field her civil strife." [1]

The opening lines of the eleventh canto of the *Paradiso* strike the keynote to the legend of St. Francis. Full of the purest Franciscan idealism, they are a poetical expansion of the collect for the feast of St. Francis, in which the Church prays: " Grant us, in imitation of him, to despise earthly things, and ever to rejoice in the participation of celestial gifts." [2] Rebuking the *insensata cura dei mortali*, Dante contrasts the carnal life of the world which Francis renounced with the spiritual life of Paradise to which Francis led, into which he himself is now received:—

" O insensata cura dei mortali,
Quanto son difettivi sillogismi
Quei che ti fanno in basso batter l'ali!
Chi dietro a iura, e chi ad aforismi
Sen giva, e chi seguendo sacerdozio,
E chi regnar per forza o per sofismi,
E chi rubare, e chi civil negozio,
Chi nel diletto della carne involto
S'affaticava, e chi si dava all'ozio;
Quando, da tutte queste cose sciolto,
Con Beatrice m'era suso in cielo
Cotanto gloriosamente accolto." [3]

[1] *Purg.* xxxii. 109-135; *Par.* xii. 106-108.

[2] *Missale Romanum, in festo S. Francisci* (Oct. 4).

[3] " O insensate care of mortals, how faulty are those arguments that make thee downward beat thy wings!

" One was going after law, and one after medicine, and one pursuing priesthood, and one dominion by force or by fraud,

" And one plunder, and one civil business; one involved in the delight of the flesh, was wearying himself, and one was giving himself to ease;

" When, from all these things set free, with Beatrice up in heaven was I thus gloriously received."—*Par.* xi. 1-12.

The rendering of the Franciscan legend, now delivered to Dante by Aquinas, is put in the form of an answer to a question, the solution of one of the poet's difficulties — a typical instance of what the Letter to Can Grande says as to the "many things which, to make manifest the glory of blessedness in those souls, will be asked of them (as of those who look upon all truth), which have great utility and delight." [1] At the same time there is an underlying note of satire, at the expense of the friars of Dante's own day. He has just heard Aquinas say that there is good fattening upon the road along which Dominic leads, if there be no straying; [2] and, seeing the contemporary state of the religious life, he finds this a hard saying. The Angelical Doctor then enlightens him, by setting forth the sublime ideals at which the friar should aim, taking for his theme the life of the founder of the rival order, while expounding the purpose of the Divine Providence in the institution of the two orders simultaneously, and laying stress upon the essential unity of their work:—

"La provvidenza, che governa il mondo
Con quel consiglio nel quale ogni aspetto
Creato è vinto pria che vada al fondo,
Però che andasse vêr lo suo diletto
La sposa di colui, ch'ad alte grida
Disposò lei col sangue benedetto,
In sè sicura ed anco a lui più fida,
Due principi ordinò in suo favore,
Che quinci e quindi le fosser per guida.

[1] *Epist.* x. 33. [2] *Par.* x. 94-96, xi. 139.

L'un fu tutto serafico in ardore,
L'altro per sapienza in terra fue
Di cherubica luce uno splendore.
Dell'un dirò, però che d'ambedue
Si dice l'un pregiando, qual ch'uom prende,
Perchè ad un fine fûr l'opere sue." [1]

Both this and the corresponding prelude to the life of St. Dominic, spoken by Bonaventura in the following canto, are based upon a passage in the *Arbor Vitae Crucifixae* of Ubertino da Casale. Speaking of the rising of St. Francis and St. Dominic at the beginning of the sixth state, Ubertino writes that the Church had then sunk into so vile a condition that, unless Christ had succoured her with a new offspring of the spirit of poverty, the sentence of death would have been passed upon her. She was contaminated with the beasts of lust, avarice, and pride; corroded with hypocrisy and heresy. The Spouse of Christ had stooped after adulterers, when her Bridegroom gave her a last summons:—

"Raising up in the midst of her men extirpating cupidity, exterminating lust, refusing dignity, execrating duplicity, defending truth, kindling charity, re-

[1] "The providence, that rules the world with that counsel wherein every created vision is vanquished before it reach the depth,

"In order that the bride of Him, who, with the loud cry, espoused her with His blessed blood, might go towards her Beloved,

"Within herself secure and also unto Him more true, two princes did ordain on her behalf, who on this side and on that should be to her as guide.

"The one was all seraphical in ardour, the other through wisdom was on earth a splendour of cherubical light.

"Of the one will I tell, albeit of both man speaks in praising one, whichever he takes, for to one end were their works."—*Par.* xi. 28-42.

forming purity, and singularly imitating Christ Jesus; who both by the example of their life strenuously rebuked the deformed Church, and by the word of the preacher excited the people to repentance; and by the argument of defence confused the pravity of heresy, and by the pleading of prayer appeased the divine wrath. Among whom, typifying Elias and Enoch, Francis and Dominic singularly shone out; of whom the first was purged by the Seraph's coal, and, inflamed with heavenly ardour, seemed to enkindle the whole world; but the second, like a Cherub, stretching out and covering, glowing with the light of wisdom, and fruitful with the word of preaching, shone the brighter above the world's darkness . . . albeit, in each, splendour and ardour were united in abundance of spirit." [1]

This conception of Francis and Dominic as respectively representing the Seraphim, whose name denotes the flaming ardour of charity, and the Cherubim, who glow with fulness of knowledge, is already found in germ in the alleged vision of the Spanish hermit. We find it, too, as far as Francis is concerned, in what most Franciscan scholars now accept as the earliest life of the saint, the *Legenda prima*, written by Thomas of Celano in 1229, three years after the death of the Seraphic Father;

[1] *Arbor Vitae*, lib. v. cap. 2 (*Jesus vilificatus*) and cap. 3 (*Jesus Franciscum generans*). This indebtedness on Dante's part was first indicated by Cosmo, *Le mistiche nozze, etc.*

where it is said: "The most blessed father Francis held the image and form of the Seraphim, and, persevering in the Cross, merited to soar up to the grade of the sublime spirits." And Bonaventura similarly speaks of him as *incendio seraphico totus ignitus*, "all enkindled by the seraphical burning." [1]

The comparison of Francis to a new spiritual sun rising upon the darkness of the mediaeval world, with which Dante makes Aquinas begin the story of his life, was traditional with the Franciscans, and the poet's lines closely resemble a passage in the prologue to the so-called *Legend of the three Companions*. Both Bonaventura and Ubertino identify the saint with the Angel in the Apocalypse, *ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God* (Rev. vii. 2).[2] Dante's picture that follows, of the saint's youthful wooing of the Lady Poverty, recalls the story told by Thomas of Celano, of how, when his friends asked him whether he was going to take a wife, Francis answered: "I am going to take a nobler and fairer bride than you ever saw, who excels all others in beauty, and surpasses all in wisdom." [3]

It is doubtful whether Dante was acquainted with

[1] *Legenda prima beati Francisci*, ed. P. Edouard d'Alençon, ii. 9, § 115; *Legenda sancti Francisci*, prologus, § i. I shall refer to Thomas of Celano as *Legenda prima* and *Legenda secunda*, to Bonaventura as *Legenda sancti Francisci*.

[2] *Par.* xi. 49-57; *Legenda trium Sociorum*, ed. Marcellino da Civezza and Teofilo Domenichelli, p. 4; *Legenda S. Francisci*, prologus, § 1.

[3] *Legenda prima*, i. 3, § 7. The bride here, however, is not poverty, but true religion.

the earlier lives. As far as the actual facts of the saint's life are concerned, his version of the Franciscan story is based upon Bonaventura's *Legenda sancti Francisci*, in favour of which, or, rather, in favour of the principle of conciliation which it represents, the earlier legends, including that of Thomas of Celano, had been destroyed. But the conception of the mystical marriage with Poverty, which is the key of the whole of the eleventh canto of the *Paradiso*, is only very slightly indicated by Thomas of Celano or by Bonaventura.[1] It came to Dante from the persecuted friars of the spiritual faction; ultimately from the *Sacrum Commercium*, attributed to Giovanni Parenti, which was written, as already stated, in 1227, the year after the saint's death, and had been rigorously suppressed.[2] In it we read how "the blessed Francis, like a true imitator and disciple of the Saviour, from the beginning of his conversion, gave himself up to seek, to find, and to hold Holy Poverty, that he might come unto her to whom the Lord had given the keys of the kingdom of heaven," and how at last he and his brethren attained to her embrace on the topmost pinnacle of the mountain of light. Here, too, we read that Poverty suffered with Christ upon the Cross, "so that nothing did seem more glorious in Him than her."

[1] *Legenda secunda*, lx. § 93; *Legenda S. Francisci*, cap. vii. § 6. Cf. below, pp. 240, 241.

[2] *Sacrum Commercium beati Francisci cum domina Paupertate*, ed. P. Edouard d'Alençon. Cf. M. Carmichael, *The Lady Poverty*, introduction.

M. Paul Sabatier has seen in the *Sacrum Commercium* the chief source of this canto of the *Paradiso*;[1] but it seems clear that Dante only knew it at second hand, as far as certain portions of it are incorporated into the *Arbor Vitae Crucifixae*, and more particularly as its spirit is reflected in the prayer to obtain the grace of poverty, which Ubertino there puts into the mouth of St. Francis himself. The latter is the direct source of the most famous image in Dante's figuration of the mystical espousals of Poverty and her second bridegroom, twelve centuries after the First had died upon the Cross:—

"Questa, privata del primo marito,
Mille e cent'anni e più dispetta e scura
Fino a costui si stette senza invito;
Nè valse udir che la trovò sicura
Con Amiclate, al suon della sua voce,
Colui ch'a tutto il mondo fe' paura;
Nè valse esser costante nè feroce,
Sì che, dove Maria rimase giuso,
Ella con Cristo salse in su la croce."[2]

[1] "C'est à lui (Jean Parenti) aussi que Dante emprunte toute l'inspiration du chant xi. du *Paradiso*" (introduction to the Temple Classics edition of the *Sacrum Commercium*, p. v.).

[2] "She, widowed of her first husband, a thousand and hundred years and more, despised and hidden, even until him remained unwooed;

"Nor availed her the tale that he, who made all the world to fear, found her with Amyclas unshaken at the sound of his voice;

"Nor availed her the being so constant and so brave that, where Mary remained below, she with Christ went up upon the Cross."—*Par.* xi. 64-72.

The words *dispetta e scura* are an echo of the Vulgate version of Isaiah (liii. 3): *Et quasi absconditus vultus ejus, et despectus, unde nec reputavimus eum.* The story of Caesar finding the fisherman Amyclas, secure in his poverty, is from Lucan, *Pharsalia*, v. 515-560.

So, in the prayer for poverty, in Ubertino, we read: "When, by reason of the height of the Cross, even Thine own Mother (who, nevertheless, alone did then faithfully worship Thee, and was joined by agonised love to Thy passion), even she, I say, and such a Mother, could not reach up to Thee; Lady Poverty, with all her penury, as Thy most dear servitor, held Thee more than ever closely embraced, and was joined most intimately to Thy sufferings." [1]

We seem to hear an echo of Thomas of Celano in Dante's description of Bernardo da Quintavalle:—

> "Il venerabile Bernardo
> Si scalzò prima, e dietro a tanta pace
> Corse, e correndo gli parv'esser tardo"; [2]

for Thomas of Celano writes: "Friar Bernardo, embracing the embassy of peace, ran swiftly after the holy man of God to purchase the kingdom of heaven." [3] But the epithet *venerabile*, applied to Bernardo, is Bonaventura's. The poet follows Bonaventura in making him the first of the companions of Francis (instead of the second, as Thomas of Celano does), and in thus associating him with Egidio and Silvestro—although, in reality, Silvestro seems to have been the last, or last but one, of the original twelve who travelled to Rome with Francis in 1210, when "royally his stern intention to Innocent he

[1] *Arbor Vitae*, lib. v. cap. 3 (*Jesus Franciscum generans*).

[2] "The venerable Bernardo bared his feet first, and after such great peace ran, and, as he ran, deemed himself but slow."—*Par.* xi. 79-81.

[3] *Legenda prima*, i. 10, § 24.

revealed, and from him had the first seal upon his order." [1] From Bonaventura, too, came the account of the mission to the Soldan of Egypt,[2] and the representation of the Stigmata as the *ultimo sigillo*, the "final seal," received from Christ in the form of the six-winged crucified Seraph on La Verna; the *sigillum summi pontificis Christi*, as the final confirmation of the *primo sigillo* given by Innocent and the *seconda corona* granted by the eternal Spirit through Honorius:—

> "Nel crudo sasso, intra Tevero ed Arno,
> Da Cristo prese l'ultimo sigillo,
> Che le sue membra due anni portârno." [3]

Bonaventura's description of the death of Francis, two years later, is wonderfully summed up by the poet in the three terzine that follow:—

> "Quando a colui ch'a tanto ben sortillo
> Piacque di trarlo suso alla mercede,
> Ch'ei meritò nel suo farsi pusillo,
> Ai frati suoi, sì com'a giuste erede,
> Raccomandò la sua donna più cara,
> E comandò che l'amassero a fede;
> E del suo grembo l'anima preclara
> Mover si volle, tornando al suo regno,
> Ed al suo corpo non volle altra bara." [4]

[1] *Par.* xi. 82-93; *Legenda S. Francisci*, cap. iii. §§ 3-5, 8-9, cap. vi. § 1.

[2] *Par.* xi. 100-105; *Legenda S. Francisci*, cap. ix. §§ 6-8. Cf. *Legenda prima*, i. 20, §§ 55-57.

[3] "On the rocky mount, between Tiber and Arno, from Christ he received the final seal, which his members for two years did bear." —*Par.* xi. 106-108. Cf. *Legenda S. Francisci*, cap. xii. § 12, cap. xiii. §§ 1-3, 9.

[4] "When to Him who chose him for so great good, it seemed meet

"When, therefore," writes Bonaventura, "for two years from the reception of the sacred Stigmata, that is, in the twentieth year from his conversion, he had been shaped by many probatory blows of painful infirmities, as it were a stone to be placed in the building of the heavenly Jerusalem, and as a ductile work brought to perfection under the hammer of many tribulations; he asked that he should be borne to Our Lady of the Portiuncula, in order that, where he had received the spirit of grace, he should there render up the spirit of life. And when he had been brought thither, to show by an example of truth that he had nothing in common with the world, in that so grievous infirmity which included every suffering, he prostrated himself in fervour of spirit all naked upon the bare ground, in order that, in that last hour in which the enemy could still rage, he might combat naked with it naked. Lying then upon the ground, having cast off his garment of sackcloth, he raised his face in his wonted fashion to heaven, and, all intent upon that glory, he covered the wound in his side with his left hand, that it might not be seen, and said to the friars: I have done my part; may Christ teach you what is yours." Then one of the friars brought

to draw him up on high to the reward that he had merited in making himself lowly,

"To his friars, as to his lawful heirs, he commended his Lady most dear, and bade that they should love her faithfully;

"And from her bosom his glorious soul willed to depart, returning to his own realm, and for his body he chose no other bier" (*Par.* xi. 109-117).

him a tunic and cord, saying: "I give thee these as to a poor man, and do thou receive them under holy obedience." "At this the holy man rejoiced in gladness of heart, for he saw that he had kept faith with Lady Poverty even unto the end, and, raising his hands to heaven, he magnified his Christ, because, disburdened of all things, he was going freely to Him. For he had done all these things through zeal for poverty, so that he could not even have a habit unless lent him by another." [1]

Frate Agostino, the friar who, far away in the south and dying, saw Francis going up into heaven, and, recovering his speech, cried, "Wait for me, Father, wait for me, I am coming with thee," appears in this sphere, with Bonaventura himself, in the next canto; [2] but Dante has omitted the characteristic touch with which Bonaventura ends his account of the Seraphic Father's death: "Birds called larks, that love the light and shun the dark, at the hour of the holy man's passage, although it was already dark and night was at hand, came in a great multitude over the roof of the house, and, flying round for a long while with unwonted joy, bore witness, as joyous as manifest, to the glory of the saint who had been wont to invite them to praise the Lord." [3]

[1] *Legenda S. Francisci*, cap. xiv. §§ 3-4.
[2] *Ibid.*, cap. xiv. § 6; *Par.* xii. 130.
[3] *Legenda S. Francisci*, cap. xiv. § 6 *ad finem*.

St. Francis made his whole life one sacred poem, not written but lived, a poem in which the mystical marriage with Poverty and the reception of the Stigmata, whereby her second bridegroom became one with the First in suffering, are the most lyrical passages. From his diverse sources, Ubertino and Bonaventura (and, perhaps, Thomas of Celano), Dante weaves his Franciscan hymn, which, if it lacks the simple humanity and vividness of the *Fioretti*, is nevertheless the noblest of tributes from the greatest poet to the greatest saint of the Middle Ages.

Again, in the seventh sphere, Dante makes St. Benedict say of St. Francis that he began his order in humility, *cominciò umilmente il suo convento*.[1] We naturally find the same idea in Bonaventura, and it is a commonplace of Franciscan literature, but the fullest commentary is afforded by Ubertino:—

"In profound humility and extirpation of all worldly glory, he most perfectly imitated Christ, in such wise that he wished to make himself and his order subject to the whole world; and, that it might be the least of all, he would have nothing from the authority of the Church, save only her authority for living according to the Holy Gospel. For he wished to procure the salvation of souls with the virtue of humility, not with the pomp of authority. . . . Wherefore, in his holy Testament, Francis forbade all

[1] *Par.* xxii. 88-90.

the friars, whether prelate or subject, to seek any letter from the Apostolic See, either for preaching or for escaping persecution. For humble Francis said that, while they humbly asked leave from the bishops and priests, they edified the very pastors of the Church by the example of humility. . . . When the friars molested him, because they were unwilling to be subject to all in such profound humility, he exclaimed with loud lamentation: 'O my brethren, my brethren, you wish to take from me the victory over the world. For Christ sent me to conquer the world in profound subjection to all; that, by love, I may draw souls to Him through the example of humility.' . . . For this cause he called them friars *minor:* that they might not presume to become *greater;* nor would he have them in any way desire ecclesiastical dignities." [1]

Further, we may recognise a Franciscan source and Franciscan imagery in one of the noblest of Dante's lyrical poems. The *Legenda secunda* of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano, written in 1246 or 1247, the connection of which with the *Legenda trium Sociorum* is still a disputed question, is the ultimate source of the story of the apparition of Poverty and her two companions to St. Francis, between Campiglia and San Quirico, on his way to Siena; which, though not referred to in the *Paradiso* (where the fuller, more mystical conception of the espousals is substituted

[1] *Arbor Vitae,* lib. v. cap. 3 (*Jesus Franciscum generans*).

for it), is the basis of Dante's canzone, *Tre donne intorno al cor mi son venute*, "Three ladies have come around my heart." The poet derived it, not directly from the *Legenda secunda* (which he could hardly have known), but through the medium of Bonaventura, who had elaborated and introduced it into his own work.[1] Even as Francis had been the Bridegroom of Poverty, so would Dante claim for himself the title of Preacher of Justice: *vir praedicans justitiam*.[2] Poverty with her two sister virtues, in poor and lowly semblance, *mulieres pauperculae*, had come to salute her bridegroom nearly a hundred years before; Justice with her spiritual offspring, ungirt, barefooted, and in torn raiment, takes visible form to speak with Love in the heart of her preacher. Justice has been cast out and persecuted by men, even as Poverty—she "to whom, as unto death, no one unbars the gate of pleasure"—had been shunned and scorned.[3] And something of the unspeakable joy that filled the heart of Francis, at the salutation of Lady Poverty, enters now into that of the banished poet, hearing Justice, the leader of the three ladies, speak with Love of their forlorn state and Love's own prophecy of the ultimate triumph of right; he exults in his own misfortunes, and counts his exile as an honour. The whole canzone transforms the Fran-

[1] *Legenda secunda*, lx. §93; *Legenda S. Francisci*, cap. vii. §6; *Canz.* xx. (Oxford Dante).

[2] *Epist.* ix. 3.

[3] *Canz.* xx. 9-15; *Par.* xi. 59-60.

ciscan vision into an allegory of the poet's own impassioned hunger and thirst after righteousness, which contains the *Divina Commedia* in germ.[1]

II

In making Bonaventura pronounce the panegyric of St. Dominic, Dante is following what was already the established rule of the two orders: a Franciscan preaching on St. Dominic in Dominican churches, a Dominican exalting St. Francis in those of the Franciscans, on the respective feasts of the two founders; and it was in accordance with this principle that, when Bonaventura himself died at the Council of Lyons, the funeral oration was delivered by the Dominican cardinal bishop of Ostia, Friar Pierre de Tarentaise, who preached from the text, *Doleo super te, frater mi Jonathan* (2 Kings, i. 26): *I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan.*[2] Sermons of this kind are attributed to Aquinas and Bonaventura. That of the former, on St. Francis, is a mere sketch;[3] but Bonaventura's on St. Dominic contains one passage

[1] This canzone, as C. de Lollis (*Quel di Lemosì*, in *Scritti vari di Filologia* in honour of E. Monaci, p. 374) and A. G. F. Howell (*Dante, his Life and Work*, pp. 46, 47) have shown, also owes something to the poem by Giraut de Bornelh, *Lo dolz chans d'un auzel* (A. Kolsen, *Sämtliche Lieder des Trobadors Giraut de Bornelh*, i. pp. 348-359).

[2] *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae opera omnia*, tom. x. p. 67. Pierre de Tarentaise became pope as Innocent V. in January, 1276, and died in the following June, less than two years after the death of Bonaventura.

[3] *S. Thomae Aquinatis opera, ed. cit.*, tom. xv. p. 227.

somewhat in the style of the discourse now put upon his lips by the poet:—

"Therefore, in these last times, two orders were instituted, which were foretold in figure in the sixth chapter of the first book of Kings, in the *two milch kine* that bore the ark of the Lord from the country of the Philistines, concerning which it is said: *The kine took the straight way to the way of Beth-shemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left* (1 Kings, vi. 12). So, therefore, to draw the yoke of the Lord, Paul was joined to Peter, Bernard to Benedict, and Francis to Dominic." [1]

Similarly, in the poem, Bonaventura begins on the same note that Aquinas had struck in the preceding canto: the common aim and inseparable glory of the two founders, and the divine scheme in the simultaneous institution of the two orders:—

"L'esercito di Cristo, che sì caro
Costò a riarmar, dietro all'insegna
Si movea tardo, suspiccioso e raro;
Quando lo imperador, che sempre regna,
Provvide alla milizia ch'era in forse,
Per sola grazia, non per esser degna;
E, com'è detto, a sua sposa soccorse
Con due campioni, al cui fare, al cui dire,
Lo popol disviato si raccorse." [2]

[1] *Opera, ed. cit.*, tom. ix. p. 565. The first and second books of Kings (Vulgate) are the two books of Samuel (A.V.).

[2] "The army of Christ, that cost so dear to arm again, was following its banner slowly, vacillatingly, and with thin ranks;
"When the Emperor, who ever reigneth, provided for the soldiery

We have here, especially in the last terzina, again an echo of Ubertino da Casale, where he speaks of the summons given by Christ to His Bride by raising up men "who both by the example of their life strenuously rebuked the deformed Church, and by the word of the preacher excited the people to repentance."[1] There has hitherto been some question as to the source of the poet's account of the early life of St. Dominic that follows; one scholar finding it in the *Speculum historiale* of Vincent of Beauvais, the Dominican encyclopaedist who died about the time of Dante's birth; another in the *Legenda aurea* of Jacopo da Voragine, who wrote in the days of his youth.[2] Fresh light has recently been thrown upon the subject by the publication by the Bollandists of a critical text of what is practically the second life of St. Dominic, composed by a Spanish friar, Petrus Ferrandi, about the year 1238.[3] This *Vita sancti Dominici* is undoubtedly Dante's ultimate source,

that were in peril, by His grace alone, not that they were worthy;

"And, as has been said, succoured His bride with two champions, at whose deeds, at whose speech, the people gathered who had gone astray."—*Par.* xii. 37-45.

[1] *Arbor Vitae*, lib. v. cap. 3 (*Jesus Franciscum generans*).

[2] *Speculum historiale*, xxix. 94-96; *Legenda aurea*, cap. cxiii. (108).

[3] F. Van Ortroy, *Pierre Ferrand O. P. et les premiers biographes de S. Dominique*, in *Analecta Bollandiana*, tom. xxx. St. Dominic died at Bologna in 1221, five years before St. Francis, and was canonised in 1234; his immediate successor, Jordanus of Saxony (who was drowned at sea on his return from the Holy Land in 1236), had written a short life of the founder in his *De initiis Ordinis Praedicatorum* (ed. J. J. Berthier, *B. Jordanis de Saxonia Opera*).

as it is of portions of the later lives. The beautiful image with which the poet begins—instead of the new sunrise from the hill-set city of Umbria, the sweet west wind bringing the spring to Europe amidst the beating of the Atlantic waves, thus emphasising the western origin of the saint at Calahorra in Old Castile—seems suggested by Petrus Ferrandi likening him to Hesperus, rising from the west upon the sons of men when evening is at hand: "for as John the Baptist, like the morning star anticipating the rising of the sun, announced the first advent of the Saviour, so this holy Dominic, bearing in himself the office of the evening star, when the light of the world is setting, is believed to have heralded the approaching judgment." [1] From Petrus Ferrandi, too, come the allusions to the dreams of Dominic's mother and godmother, the story of his nurse finding him stretched upon the bare ground, and the picture of his early devotion to learning.[2] The allegorical interpretation of the names of his parents seems derived from the later and fuller biography by Theodoricus de Appoldia.[3] For the rest, Dante merely adapts the account of the early life of Dominic to his purpose, to make a companion picture to that of the bridegroom of Poverty. His

[1] *Par.* xii. 46-57; Petrus Ferrandi, § 2.

[2] *Par.* xii. 58-78, 82-87; Petrus Ferrandi, §§ 3-8. These episodes and legends were adopted from Petrus by the other thirteenth-century biographers of St. Dominic.

[3] *Acta ampliora S. Dominici*, § 13; *Par.* xii. 79-81.

lines do not breathe the same charm as when the *poverello di Dio* was the theme, and his portrait of "the amorous lover of Christian Faith, the sacred athlete, benign to his own and cruel to the foes,"[1] leaves the reader a little cold. There is more of the legendary element, especially the miracles, of a rather petty description, with which tradition invested his childhood, more of his great aims and ideals, but practically nothing of the man's personality. After the ardent studies of his youth at the schools of Palencia, having "in brief time become a great doctor," we find him plunged at once into the struggle with the Albigenses. The story ends abruptly:—

> "Di lui si fecer poi diversi rivi,
> Onde l'orto cattolico si riga,
> Sì che i suoi arbuscelli stan più vivi."[2]

There is not a word of his subsequent life, nor of his death, which was a strikingly beautiful one, hardly less closely wrapped in the embraces of Poverty than that of Francis himself some five years later.[3] But, indeed, the whole man is a shadowy figure when compared with Francis. His biographers depict him

[1] *Par.* xii. 55-57.

[2] "From him thereafter sprang diverse streams, whereby the Catholic garden is watered, so that its shrubs abide with fuller life." —*Par.* xii. 103-105. These lines slightly resemble a passage about the University of Paris, in a sermon preached by Bonaventura at Paris in April, 1273, during the schism in the schools caused by Siger of Brabant: *Studium Parisius est fons, a quo rivuli exeunt per totum mundum, et episcopi et archiepiscopi et alii ecclesiarum rectores* (cited by P. Mandonnet, *Siger de Brabant*, p. ccxix. *n.*).

[3] Cf. Petrus Ferrandi, § 49.

as a man of boundless love, no less than of profound knowledge; his constant prayer was for that true charity which would be efficacious in winning the salvation of others; he sold his books when a student, to give alms to the poor, and tried to sell himself into slavery for the redemption of a prisoner; but it is impossible to follow his apologists in denying that he was closely associated with the workings of the Inquisition in Provence.[1] Dante's description of him, as *ai nemici crudo*, is more or less historically true. In the Empyrean Heaven, where Francis appears, as type of the renewal of evangelical life, opposite to Eve, the type before her fall of the primitive Church, Dominic is not seen. The poet does not name the saints who are opposite to Rebecca, Judith, and Ruth, respectively; but it is tempting to suppose that he would have assigned the sixth place to Dominic, opposite to Judith — the type, according to Isidore of Seville, of the Church as saving the people of God from destruction and punishing enemies of the Faith.

III

Dante nowhere mentions Bonaventura, save in this twelfth canto of the *Paradiso*, and it is questionable how far he was acquainted with, or influenced by,

[1] Cf. J. Guiraud, *Saint Dominique*, chap. ii.

[2] *Allegoriae quaedam Scripturae Sacrae* (*Opera*, tom. v. col. 116).

his works other than his *Legenda* of St. Francis and his writings on the affairs of the order. Bonaventura as theologian and philosopher was more old-fashioned than Albertus and Aquinas, clinging more closely to Augustine and Hugh of St. Victor, and admitting far less of the new Aristotelian scholasticism into his teaching.[1] His chief theological work, the voluminous commentary on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, was written when lecturing at Paris before his elevation to the general-ministry of the order. It is clear from the position of Peter Lombard in the fourth heaven, in the garland of Aquinas and not in that of Bonaventura, that Dante regarded not the Franciscan, but the Dominican doctor, as the exponent of the Master of the Sentences.[2] The passages from Bonaventura's commentary, that are quoted as bearing upon the *Divina Commedia*, are usually more significant as illustrations than as possible sources. Bonaventura, like Dante at the opening of the *Paradiso*, makes use of the mystical doctrine of the law of spiritual gravitation, that the soul is moved by love as the body by its weight; but here both poet and theologian have a common source in the *Confessions*

[1] Cf. G. Gentile, *La Filosofia*, pp. 71-75, for Bonaventura's attitude towards mundane philosophy. See, too, generally, E. Di Bisogno, *San Bonaventura e Dante*. Miss Macdonell's statement that "there is infinitely more of Bonaventura than of Thomas Aquinas in the *Divine Comedy*" (*Sons of Francis*, p. 406) is a picturesque exaggeration. The influence of Aquinas penetrates the whole poem, even more deeply than that of Augustine.

[2] *Par.* x. 106-108.

of St. Augustine.[1] The same probably applies to Dante's beautiful enunciation of the doctrine of the Mansions of Beatitude, fittingly placed on the lips of Piccarda, whereby he learns "how everywhere in heaven is paradise, even though the grace of the Supreme Good rain not there in one fashion."[2] "No one," writes Bonaventura, "partakes of God in the supreme degree *absolutely*, but in the supreme degree *with respect to himself;* for each one partakes of God so much, not that God cannot be partaken of more, but not more *by him*, because he may not advance further, and is utterly content with that state which he hath."[3] Here it is less probable that Dante is directly indebted to Bonaventura, than that he is developing the same thought from its ultimate source in the *De Civitate Dei*. Again, on the subject of eternal punishment, Bonaventura writes: "Whoso sinneth mortally puts a perishable good before the eternal and infinite Good; therefore he despises and offends the infinite Good. But the greatness of the offence is in proportion to the greatness of him who is offended; therefore, when He is infinite, the offence must be judged infinite. Since, therefore, the penalty must be in proportion to the offence, it is necessary that an infinite penalty be paid for deadly sin; but it cannot be paid infinitely in intensity, but in dura-

[1] *Comment. in Lib. IV. Sententiarum*, dist. xx., pars i., a. 1, q. 6.
[2] *Par.* iii. 70-90.
[3] *Op. cit.*, dist. xlix., pars i., a. 1, q. 6.

tion." [1] There is possibly an echo, or condensation, of this passage in the fifth heaven, where Dante is moved by the consideration of the love of the blessed spirits that appear in the spheres to measure the loss of it by the souls of the damned:—

> " Ben è che senza termine si doglia
> Chi, per amor di cosa che non duri,
> Eternalmente quell'amor si spoglia." [2]

The case is similar with the *Breviloquium*, a masterly summary on a small scale of the theological doctrines of the day, which Bonaventura wrote shortly after his commentary on the *Sentences*. Starting from the Blessed Trinity as the first beginning of all things, it proceeds through the creation of the world, the origin of evil and the nature of sin, the Incarnation of the Word, the grace of the Holy Spirit, and the Sacraments, to the Last Judgment, Purgatory, Hell, and the glory of Paradise. There is no clear evidence of direct indebtedness on Dante's part, but it is full of valuable illustrations of the theology that underlies the sacred poem. For instance, we read:—

" The created world is, as it were, a book in which the Trinity as creative artist shines back, is represented, and read, according to the three grades of expression; that is, by way of imprint (*vestigium*), of image (*imago*), and of likeness (*similitudo*). The im-

[1] *Op. cit.*, dist. xliv., pars ii., a. 1, q. 1.

[2] " Right is it that without end should he bewail, who, for love of a thing that endureth not, eternally doth strip himself of that love." —*Par.* xv. 10-12.

print is found in all creatures; the image only in intellectual or rational spirits; the likeness in the deiform, the godlike, alone. Through these, as it were by the steps of a ladder, the human intellect is born to ascend by degrees to the supreme beginning, which is God." [1]

We are reminded of the first canto of the *Paradiso*, where Beatrice tells the poet that order is the form that makes the universe like to God, and that here "the highest creatures" see the *orma dell'eterno valore*, "the imprint of the eternal Power"; [2] and still more, perhaps, of the opening lines of the tenth canto, where it is said that the Trinity made all things—*quanto per mente o per loco si gira*, "whatever circles through mind or through space," that is, can be conceived of by the understanding or experienced by the senses—with so great order, *ch'esser non puote senza gustar di lui chi ciò rimira*, "that he who looks upon it cannot be without some taste of Him." [3] The image of God in the souls in Purgatory may be regarded as a further stage in Dante's spiritual ascent; while the deiform, or godlike, condition of those who have received the light of glory, and who appear to him as he mounts through the spheres, is indicated in the fifth canto of the *Paradiso*, where Beatrice bids him speak and believe these spirits *come a dii;* [4] and in the fifteenth, where love and knowledge have become

[1] *Breviloquium*, ii. 12.
[2] *Par.* i. 103-108.
[3] *Par.* x. 1-6.
[4] *Par.* v. 123.

equal in each as they are in God, the first Equality.[1] And when the poet, in the Empyrean, looks upon Mary, *la faccia ch' a Cristo più si somiglia*, " the face that is most like to Christ," he says that all which he had seen before did not show him *di Dio tanto sembiante*, " so great semblance of God." [2]

It is tempting to suppose that Dante was influenced by Bonaventura's specifically mystical treatises, but here we must remember that both drew from the same sources: Augustine, Dionysius, Bernard, and the Victorines; though, of the Victorines, Bonaventura was more impressed by Hugh, Dante by Richard. More clearly and systematically than any writer before him, Bonaventura in his *De triplici Via* deals with the threefold mystical way: purgation, illumination, and union; transferring the Dionysian doctrine of the threefold function of an angelic hierarchy to the spiritual field of the individual soul.[3] His most famous mystical work, deservedly the best known of his writings, is the *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*. It was written, as the author himself tells us, on La Verna in 1259, a little more than two years after he became minister-general, and takes its starting-point from the reception of the Stigmata by St. Francis. The six wings of the crucified Seraph are six elevations or stages of illumination, " by which the soul, as it were by steps or journeys,

[1] *Par.* xv. 73-78. [2] *Par.* xxxii. 85-87, 91-93.

[3] As already implied, I take the *Mystica Theologia* as probably later than Bonaventura.

is disposed to pass to peace through ecstatic excesses of Christian wisdom": six stages of divine knowledge, two outside the mind, two within, and two above. These are the knowledge of God through His imprints, in the universe and in the sensible world; the knowledge of God through His image, first in the natural powers of the soul (memory, understanding, and will), and then as these are reformed by grace; the consideration of the Divine Unity in Essence, and the Goodness of the Blessed Trinity.[1] By these stages the soul passes into a state in which she abandons all workings of the intellect, and her love is all transferred and transformed into God:—

"But if thou wouldst know how these things are done, question grace, not doctrine; desire, not understanding; the sob of prayer, not the study of texts; the bridegroom, not the master; God, not man; darkness, not clarity; not light, but the fire that inflames utterly and transfers into God, with excessive fervour and most ardent love."[2]

It may well be that Bonaventura and Dante are merely kindred spirits on the same road, working (as far as they can be said to work from books apart from personal experience) from the same mystical sources. The general conception of the soul's ascent, though differing in details, is essentially the same with both. Among the passages in the *Itinerarium* that suggest the *Divina Commedia* are those in which

[1] *Itinerarium*, prologus, § 3, *et passim*.

[2] *Itinerarium*, vii. § 6.

Bonaventura speaks of the mystical part of the three theological virtues in purifying, illuminating, and perfecting the soul, to prepare her for her supreme ascent,[1] and of the nine dispositions of the inner man as corresponding in grades with the nine angelic orders. These successive dispositions are *nuntiatio*, *dictatio*, *ductio*, *ordinatio*, *roboratio*, *imperatio*, *susceptio*, *revelatio*, *unctio*, and a certain analogy between them and the successive grades represented by Dante's nine moving spheres can easily be traced. Like the nine moving spheres and the nine angelic orders with which these also correspond, they fall into three divisions, the first three pertaining to *nature* in the mind, the next three to *industry*, and the last three to *grace*. Thus disposed, " the soul, entering into herself, enters into the heavenly Jerusalem, where, contemplating the orders of Angels, she sees in them God, who dwells in them and works all that they do." [2]

Two less important treatises, erroneously attributed to Bonaventura, have been cited among the sources of the *Divina Commedia*. The plan and symmetry of the *Purgatorio*, as Dr. Moore has shown, is partly based upon the particular arrangement of the seven capital sins, with the idea of representing the Blessed Virgin as the supreme example of each opposing virtue held up as the antidote in the successive terraces of the mountain, which Dante apparently

[1] *Itinerarium*, iv. § 3. Cf. below, chapter ix. [2] *Ibid.*, iv. § 4.

derived from the *Speculum Beatae Mariae Virginis*.[1] This beautiful little book of devotion is now recognised as the work of Bonaventura's German contemporary in the order, Friar Conrad of Saxony.[2] Some of the imagery of the *Paradiso*, especially connected with the symbolical dance and the glory of the souls of the doctors, has been more questionably traced to the *Diaeta Salutis*, already mentioned, which is now likewise excluded from the canon of Bonaventura's works and attributed to Guillaume de Lavicea, also a Franciscan, an older contemporary of the poet.[3] But here the more significant features in the imagery are purely scriptural in their origin.

The poet makes Bonaventura thus, in three lines, sum up his own life and character:—

> "Io son la vita di Bonaventura
> Da Bagnoregio, che nei grandi offici
> Sempre posposi la sinistra cura."[4]

La sinistra cura, "the left-hand care," is usually taken as referring to temporal affairs in general, or to the dignity and emoluments of office—for Bonaventura, besides minister-general of his order, was cardinal and bishop of Albano. Dr. Moore has

[1] *Studies in Dante*, ii. pp. 63, 194.

[2] *Speculum Beatae Mariae Virginis Fr. Conradi a Saxonia*, in the *Bibliotheca Franciscana Ascetica Medii Aevi*. Conrad died in 1279, five years after Bonaventura.

[3] Cf. *S. Bonaventurae opera omnia*, tom. x. p. 24; E. Di Bisogno, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-75.

[4] "I am the life of Bonaventura of Bagnoregio, who in the great offices always postponed the left-hand care."—*Par.* xii. 127-129.

suggested that Dante had in his mind the text in Proverbs (iii. 16), where it is said of wisdom: *In her left hand are riches and honour.*[1] There is, however, another interpretation possible, and one no less in accordance with Bonaventura's character. Richard of St. Victor explains the two Cherubim of gold on the left and right sides of the mercy seat, in Exodus (xxv. 17-22), as mystically signifying two kinds of contemplation: "Perchance in that Cherub who stood on the right should be understood that kind of contemplation which is above reason, though not beside reason; but in that Cherub who stood on the left, that kind of contemplation which is above reason, and seems to be beside reason. For we know how the left hand is more often held under the raiment and as it were hidden, whereas the right is more frequently held out openly. Wherefore, by the left hand the more hidden things, by the right the more manifest are fittingly understood."[2] It is, I think, conceivable that Dante meant by *la sinistra cura* this highest kind of contemplation of "hidden things," which, although a mystic, Bonaventura in his life and work postponed, or made subordinate, to his preaching of the "more manifest" things for general edification, and his active devotion to the purification of his order.

[1] *Studies in Dante*, i. p. 64.

[2] *Benjamin major*, i. 12.

IV

Dante, in selecting St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventura to preside together over the fourth heaven, emphasises the essential unity of scholasticism and mysticism in the religious thought of his times. One would, perhaps, have expected a more scholastic colouring in the group in which Aquinas appears, a more mystical tendency in the spirits that accompany Bonaventura, in accordance with what the latter himself says, in speaking of the characteristics of the Dominicans and the Franciscans respectively: "The former aim chiefly at speculation, and afterwards at unction; the latter principally at unction, and afterwards at speculation."[1] This is hardly the case with the two garlands in the sphere of the Sun, the mystics being more prominent among the companions of Aquinas than among those of Bonaventura. It is, however, easy to associate all those in the first group of twelve with Aquinas himself. On his right is his *frate e maestro*, Albertus Magnus; the nine that follow — Gratian, Peter Lombard, Solomon as writer of the *Canticle of Canticles*, Dionysius, Orosius, Boëthius, Isidore, Bede, Richard of St. Victor—are all cited in the *Summa Theologica*

[1] *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*, xxii. § 21. Here he takes the Friars Preachers and Friars Minor equally as Cherubim, while St. Francis himself as an ecstatic is of the order of Seraphim.

and may be regarded as having aided in the formation of his doctrine, as, indeed, upon three (Peter Lombard, Dionysius, and Boëthius) he wrote special commentaries; finally, on his left, is Siger of Brabant, the opponent whom he confuted on earth.[1] At first sight, it is not so easy to explain the poet's choice of all Bonaventura's eleven companions. On his right are Illuminato and Agostino, the two friars whom he praised in his *Legenda* of St. Francis, and who (though, in the case of Illuminato, not quite historically) are evidently introduced as types of that early Franciscan discipline which he attempted to restore in the order, and upon which he modelled his own life;[2] next to

[1] *Par.* x. 97-138.

[2] *Par.* xii. 130-133:—

> " Illuminato ed Augustin son quici,
> Che fûr dei primi scalzi poverelli,
> Che nel capestro a Dio si fêro amici."

Benvenuto da Imola (*Comentum*, v. p. 88) holds that the poet places these two friars, although *homines ignorantes*, among the doctors as types of unlearned men who taught the world by their good deeds and good example. Dante read of them in the *Legenda S. Francisci* of Bonaventura, where Illuminato, who accompanied Francis on his mission to the Soldan, is described as *vir utique luminis et virtutis* (ix. 8), and Agostino as *vir utique sanctus et justus*, who, when minister of the friars in Terra di Lavoro, saw the vision of Francis going up to heaven and died at the same hour (xiv. 6). Illuminato seems to have been with the saint on La Verna; he afterwards became secretary to the famous relaxed minister-general, Friar Elias, and ultimately bishop of Assisi. Cf. Salimbene, *Cronica, ed. cit.*, p. 39. Miss Macdonell (*Sons of Francis*, pp. 396-398) points out that he was the only one of the earlier companions who accepted ecclesiastical promotion and disposed of his own property, and that Dante's portrait of him (based on Bonaventura's words) as an ideal Franciscan is consequently somewhat misleading. The poet's silence concerning Friar Leo is probably similarly due to Bonaventura's careful abstention from naming him, as one whose name meant controversy in the order.

them is Hugh of St. Victor, whom he exalted above all other mediaeval writers, and from whom he drew more than from any other, except St. Augustine. Then, on his left, is Joachim of Flora, occupying a corresponding position to that of Siger in the previous garland. The intervening seven show a much greater variety of work and character than the spirits in the former circle; Peter Comestor, as an historian, is a companion figure to Orosius; Anselm and Rabanus Maurus may be ranked among Bonaventura's sources (though equally so among those of Aquinas); Nathan and John Chrysostom, as rebukers of wickedness, may represent Bonaventura's own struggle against corruption (he also quotes the latter very frequently in his works). But why should Petrus Hispanus, the logician, and Donatus, the grammarian, be associated with Bonaventura rather than with Thomas Aquinas?

The answer is, I think, to be found in the fact that Bonaventura was the author of that little treatise or sermon, which Dante probably knew, *De reductione Artium ad Theologiam*, in which he shows that all the arts and sciences come down from above, illumine the Scriptures, illustrate the union of the soul with God, and can be brought into the service of theology. His conclusion, indeed, exemplifies the conception of the single tendency and the unity of all learning and knowledge, which underlies Dante's representation of the fourth heaven:—

"It is thus clear how *the manifold wisdom of God*, which is lucidly revealed in Sacred Scripture, is concealed in all knowledge and in all nature. It is clear, too, how all kinds of learning serve theology; and, therefore, she takes examples and uses words pertaining to every branch of science. Clear is it, too, how broad is the illuminative way, and how, in everything which is perceived by the senses or which is known,[1] God lieth hidden. And this is the fruit of all sciences; that, in all, faith may be built up, God be honoured, and conduct reformed, and those consolations be drawn which are in the union of the Bridegroom with the Bride. But this is wrought through love, in which the whole intention of Holy Scripture is fulfilled, and every illumination coming down from above, and without which all knowledge is vain." [2]

We may, indeed, say that this mystical unity of all knowledge is the chief significance of the appearance of the two circles of *ardenti spiri*, glowing spirits, in the fourth heaven. *He that shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.* Thus the lovers of Holy Poverty, the rebukers of wickedness and corruption, the most God-intoxicated of the mystics, the profoundest of the theologians, the writers of the humblest text-books, are all, equally

[1] *In omni re quae sentitur sive quae cognoscitur :* Dante's *quanto per mente o per loco si gira* (*Par.* x. 4).

[2] *De reductione Artium ad Theologiam*, § 26. The awkward title is not due to Bonaventura.

and without distinction, co-operating with the Angelic Powers against the powers of darkness, all alike doing the work enjoined upon them by Truth from her changeless throne. The great St. Anselm, called "the second father of scholasticism," who wrote lofty treatises on the Blessed Trinity and the Incarnation, and claimed to have discovered a new proof of the existence of God, is side by side with Aelius Donatus, *ch'alla prim' arte degnò por la mano*, "who to the first art deigned to set his hand," by writing an elementary Latin grammar.[1] Significant, too, in this respect is Bonaventura's introduction of Petrus Hispanus, the Portuguese prelate and writer on logic, who was pope for eight months as John XXI., as *Pietro Ispano lo qual giù luce in dodici libelli*, "Peter of Spain who gives light below in twelve booklets."[2] Dante has no need here for a repetition of the gentle rebuke that this pontiff's immediate predecessor, Adrian V., had administered for paying homage, in the world beyond the grave, to the dignity which had been his on earth.[3] In Paradise, John's having held Holy Church within his arms is so utterly a thing of the past that it is not deemed worthy of even a passing allusion; but, in the twelve booklets of his *Summulae logicales*, he still "gives light below." Seen from this mystical height, it is a greater thing to have written even the *Barbara Celarent* that

[1] *Par.* xii. 137, 138. [2] *Par.* xii. 134, 135.
[3] *Purg.* xix. 130-138.

tormented our youth than to have worn the triple crown of the Papacy.[1]

This mystical unity of knowledge and aspiration is further exemplified in the position of Siger of Brabant and Joachim of Flora. Siger, the chief champion of Averroïsm in the University of Paris, attacked the psychology of Albertus and Aquinas in 1270, in his *Quaestiones de anima intellectiva*, and was confuted by the latter in the treatise *De unitate intellectus*. Condemned as a heretic in 1277, and cited to appear before the tribunal of the inquisitor of France, he seems to have fled to Italy; where, some time before November, 1284, he ended his days at Orvieto—but whether under sentence of perpetual imprisonment, or murdered by his own secretary, or put to death by the papal authority, is still uncertain.[2] We have already seen how Bonaventura proceeded against Joachim's adherents and attempted to stamp out his doctrines in the Franciscan order, and how these doctrines were ultimately condemned, to some extent, by the Church. Here, in Paradise,

[1] For contemporary views of Petrus Hispanus as pope, cf. Salimbene, *Cronica, ed. cit.*, p. 304, and Ptolomaeus Lucensis, in *Rer. It. Script.*, xi. col. 1176. Dante's symmetrical treatment of this sphere is seen in the fact that two spirits in each group outlived the speakers: Albertus (d. 1280) and Siger (d. *circa* 1284), in the case of Aquinas (d. 1274); Illuminato (d. 1281) and Petrus Hispanus (d. 1277), in the case of Bonaventura (d. 1274). Also, in each group there is one Hebrew spirit and one Greek, associated together in each: Solomon and Dionysius, Nathan and St. John Chrysostom.

[2] Cf. especially C. Baeumker, *Die Impossibilia des Siger von Brabant*, and the masterly work of P. Mandonnet, *Siger de Brabant et l'Averroïsme latin au XIII^me siècle*; also, F. d'Ovidio, *op. cit.*, pp. 398-402.

the memories of Siger and Joachim are vindicated by Aquinas and Bonaventura themselves.

Thus Aquinas of Siger:—

> "Questi, onde a me ritorna il tuo riguardo,
> È il lume d'uno spirto, che in pensieri
> Gravi a morir gli parve venir tardo;
> Essa è la luce eterna di Sigieri,
> Che, leggendo nel vico degli strami,
> Sillogizzò invidiosi veri." [1]

And Bonaventura of Joachim:—

> "Qui . . . lucemi da lato
> Il calabrese abate Gioacchino,
> Di spirito profetico dotato." [2]

Dante, in his apotheosis of Aquinas and Bonaventura, is reversing the process which was afterwards adopted by the Italian painters from Francesco Traini to Filippino Lippi, who, in depicting the triumph of the Angelical Doctor, represented one or more prostrate heretics vanquished and overpowered beneath his feet. Here, in the sacred poem, the supposed heretic stands instead at the doctor's left hand, sharing the same glory in Paradise, seen no longer as a misbeliever, a false teacher, an opponent, but as one who laboured no less zealously for the truth, and whose labour proved no less acceptable

[1] "This one, from whom thy gaze returns to me, is the light of a spirit who, in deep thoughts, deemed himself slow in coming to his death;

"It is the eternal light of Siger, who, lecturing in the Street of Straw, syllogised invidious truths."—*Par.* x. 133-138.

[2] "Here . . . shines at my side the Calabrian abbot Joachim, endowed with the spirit of prophecy."—*Par.* xii. 139-141.

before Truth's changeless throne—albeit he saw not the truth in all respects with the eyes of the man who triumphed where he fell. It is clear that Dante is here representing two supposed or unconscious heretics (for both Joachim and Siger profess their orthodox faith and submission to revealed doctrine) as "fellow-servants unto Truth" with the Church's official theologians. It reads like a plea for a wider outlook in the theological and philosophical thought of the age, though it may be no more than a personal defence of two individuals whose life or fate had aroused Dante's sympathy. In any case, this vindication of Siger and Joachim, by the mouths of Aquinas and Bonaventura, is not without analogy with the approval of the poet's own faith by St. Peter in the Stellar Heaven.[1]

[1] *Par.* xxiv. 148-154, xxv. 10-12. Joachim's profession of orthodoxy is in his *epistola prologalis*, prefixed to both the *Concordia novi ac veteris Testamenti* and the *Expositio in Apocalipsim*; Siger's in the *Quaestiones de anima intellectiva* (ed. Mandonnet, pp. 99, 112), iii. and vii. Cf. below, appendix, ii.

CHAPTER VIII

DANTE AND THE TWO MECHTHILDS

I. Matelda and the Earthly Paradise; her symbolism in the *Purgatorio*. II. Mechthild of Magdeburg; the *Lux Divinitatis* and the *Divina Commedia*. III. Mechthild of Hackeborn; the *Liber specialis gratiae* and the *Divina Commedia*. IV. The two Mechthilds and the poet's Matelda.

I

Dr. Moore has observed that the question of Matelda involves "one of the thorniest problems in the *Divina Commedia*." The gracious figure to whom Dante applies the name, in outward aspect an anticipation of the youthful women in Botticelli's painted allegories, appears to the poet when he enters the Earthly Paradise, as a glorified realisation of his previous dream of Rachel's sister Leah:—

"Coi piè ristetti, e con gli occhi passai
Di là dal fiumicello, per mirare
La gran variazion dei freschi mai;
E là m'apparve, sì com' egli appare
Subitamente cosa che disvia
Per maraviglia tutt'altro pensare,
Una donna soletta, che si gia
Cantando ed iscegliendo fior da fiore,
Ond'era pinta tutta la sua via.
'Deh, bella donna, ch'ai raggi d'amore
Ti scaldi, s'io vo' credere ai sembianti,
Che soglion esser testimon del core,

Vegnati in voglia di trarreti avanti,'
Diss'io a lei, ' verso questa riviera,
Tanto ch'io possa intender che tu canti.
Tu mi fai rimembrar, dove e qual era
Proserpina nel tempo che perdette
La madre lei, ed ella primavera.'
Come si volge, con le piante strette
A terra ed intra sè, donna che balli,
E piede innanzi piede a pena mette,
Volsesi in sui vermigli ed in sui gialli
Fioretti verso me, non altrimenti
Che vergine che gli occhi onesti avvalli;
E fece i preghi miei esser contenti,
Sì appressando sè, che il dolce suono
Veniva a me co' suoi intendimenti.
Tosto che fu là dove l'erbe sono
Bagnate già dall' onde del bel fiume,
Di levar gli occhi suoi mi fece dono.
Non credo che splendesse tanto lume
Sotto le ciglia a Venere trafitta
Dal figlio fuor di tutto suo costume." [1]

[1] " With my feet I stayed, and with my eyes I passed across the rivulet, to gaze upon the great variety of the flower-clad boughs;

" And there appeared to me, even as appears suddenly a thing that for wonder turns aside all other thoughts,

" A lady all alone, who went singing and choosing flower from flower wherewith all her path was painted.

" ' Ah, fair lady, that in the rays of love art basking, if I may believe the features, which are wont to be witnesses of the heart,

" ' May it please thee to draw forward,' I said to her, ' towards this stream, so far that I can hear what thou dost sing.

" ' Thou makest me remember where and what was Proserpine, at the time when her mother lost her, and she the spring-flowers.'

" Even as, with feet close to the ground and to each other, a lady turns who is dancing, and hardly sets foot before foot,

" She turned upon the red and yellow flowers towards me, not otherwise than a maiden who casts down her modest eyes;

" And made my prayers to be content, by so drawing near, that the sweet sound came to me together with its meaning.

" As soon as she was there where the grass is now bathed by

It is her part to instruct the poet and his two companions concerning the nature of this Eden regained by the purgatorial pains, to initiate them into the spirit of this new life of bliss, of which she seems the personification; she not only points out the triumphal pageant of the Church, but admonishes Dante as to how he should look upon it; she draws him through the purifying waters of Lethe, and finally leads him and Statius to drink of the renovating tide of Eunoë.[1] We do not actually learn her name until the end of the last canto of the *Purgatorio ;* and then it is mentioned by Beatrice, not as something previously unknown, but as a matter of course: *Prega Matelda che il ti dica.*[2] I can see small grounds for the theory, usually accepted, that she is a permanent inhabitant of the Earthly Paradise. The whole pageant passes away, and we hear no more of either her or Statius, simply because Dante is absorbed in his ascent with Beatrice into the Heavens.

Matelda's position in the Earthly Paradise corresponds, to some extent, with that of St. Bernard in the Empyrean Heaven, inasmuch as she takes the place of Vergil as Dante's guide, even as Beatrice resigns her office to St. Bernard. Among the in-

the waters of the fair river, she did me the grace of raising her eyes.

" I think not that so great light shone under the lids of Venus, when transfixed by her son utterly beyond his usage."—*Purg.* xxviii. 34-66.

[1] *Purg.* xxviii. 88-144; xxix. 1-15, 61-63; xxxi. 91-105; xxxiii. 118-135.

[2] " Pray Matelda that she tell it thee."—*Purg.* xxxiii. 119.

numerable theories as to what she symbolises, the two most in vogue are mutually complementary. According to the one, she represents the glorified active life, realising in the state of recovered Eden what Leah had figured in the Old Testament; the idealisation of the active life, in which, according to the sentence of Isidore of Seville, cited by Aquinas: "All the vices are first to be extirpated by the exercise of good works, in order that, in the contemplative life, man may pass, with the eye of the mind already pure, to contemplate the divine light." [1] A modification of this view has been suggestively expressed by Giovanni Gentile, according to which Matelda is *la vita attiva cristiana*, when this becomes the aspiration towards God, the zeal to be made worthy of receiving His spirit and of being united to Him. She thus represents "a moment of the spirit, intermediate between Vergil and Beatrice: it is the perfecting of Vergil, because it christianises those virtues of the man of antiquity that were in Vergil; and it is the preparation for Beatrice, because his virtues have their fulfilment in the holy virtues of faith, hope, and charity. Matelda gathers up from man on earth the matter upon which Beatrice, by heavenly grace, will blow the Divine breath and impress the ultimate form." [2]

According to the other, but not incompatible

[1] *De Summo Bono* (*Sententiae*), iii. 15; *Summa Theologica*, II. ii., q. 181, a. 1.

[2] *La Filosofia*, pp. 130-132.

interpretation, Matelda personifies the temporal felicity to which, in the dual scheme of the *De Monarchia*, man is to be led by the teachings of Philosophy, and which is figured in the Earthly Paradise: the "blessedness of this life, which consists in the exercise of man's natural powers." This blessedness is found in the twofold exercise of the mind: the practical, which "consists in ourselves working virtuously, that is, in integrity, with prudence, with temperance, with fortitude, and with justice"; and the speculative, which consists "in considering the works of God and of nature." [1] Matelda herself explains her joyous aspect by referring the poet to the psalm *Delectasti* (xci. 5, or xcii. 4): *For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work; I will triumph in the works of thy hands;* and, in his preparatory dream of Leah, Dante does not make her say that she represents the active life, but merely that, in comparison with her sister Rachel, labour rather than vision contents her: *Lei lo vedere, e me l'oprare appaga.*[2] The identification of Matelda with the temporal felicity of the Earthly Paradise might seem confirmed by Dante's vividly expressed desire to cross the stream of Lethe, with its symbolical "three paces," and to be with her where she stands smiling and gathering flowers on the other bank.[3]

[1] *Mon.* iii. 16, 45-47; *Conv.* iv. 22, 103-114.

[2] *Purg.* xxviii. 79-81, xxvii. 108.

[3] *Purg.* xxviii. 67-75. Cf. F. d'Ovidio, *Il Purgatorio e il suo preludio*, pp. 567-572, 589-590.

My own view concerning the precise symbolism of Matelda is that Dante is again, as elsewhere in the poem, having recourse to the *dottrina* of him *che a considerar fu più che viro*. Richard of St. Victor gives an interpretation of Rachel and Leah which differs somewhat from the usual one of mediaeval theologians. According to him: "Leah is affection inflamed by divine inspiration; Rachel is reason illumined by divine revelation; Leah, affection composing itself to the norm of justice; Rachel, reason exalting itself to the contemplation of heavenly wisdom."[1] Matelda, then, would be the realisation of this *affectio divina inspiratione inflammata, ad normam justitiae seipsam componens*, "affection inflamed by divine inspiration, composing itself to the norm of justice." The purgatorial process is the freeing of the soul from disordered love; Matelda, in the Earthly Paradise, represents this love rightly ordered and inflamed by divine inspiration; awaiting the mystical ascent to the vision and fruition of God. Fittingly, therefore, does she seem to Dante as basking *ai raggi d'amore*, and fittingly does the light from her eyes surpass the splendour that shone from those of Venus in the utmost transports of earthly passion. That the next step in Dante's spiritual progress should be the sight of the triumphal pageant of the Church, to which Matelda directs him,

[1] *Benjamin minor*, cap. iv. Affection, thus inflamed and ordered, is the perfection of the active life. Cf. Lubin, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

and in which Beatrice herself is to descend, illustrates, in the most striking fashion, the importance that the poet attaches to the institutional element of religion, even for the mystic; the visible Church forms, as it were, the framework, within which the speculative and volitional elements can work, and the mystic soars up, through and beyond it, by personal experience, on the wings of love.[1]

The historical identity of Matelda is the most insoluble part of the problem. It may be taken for granted that she is the idealised presentment of a real person, and not an allegorical figure alone. The view, unhesitatingly stated by most of the early commentators (none of whom suggest any alternative, save, perhaps, the author of the *Ottimo Commento*, for whom she is simply Leah under another name), that she is the great Countess Matilda of Tuscany, is still accepted by Dr. Moore among the moderns.[2] The diametrically opposite theory, first put forward by Scartazzini, and modified later by Adolfo Borgognoni and others, according to which Matelda is

[1] Cf. F. von Hügel, *op. cit.*, I., chap. ii. (*The three elements of Religion*).

[2] To discuss the question does not lie within the scope of the present work. Cf. especially Scartazzini, *Commento Lipsiese*, ii. pp. 595-617; W. Preger, *Dante's Matelda ;* Moore, *Studies in Dante*, iii. pp. 210-216; A. Borgognoni, *Matelda: studio dantesco ;* Lubin, *op. cit.*, pp. 314-353; M. Scherillo, in the *Bullettino*, N.S., x., pp. 370-383; A. Mancini, *ibid.*, N.S., xii., pp. 87-94; and the ample study of F. d'Ovidio, *op. cit.*, pp. 469-514, 567-593. Francesco Torraca (*La D. C. nuovamente commentata*, pp. 625-626) interprets Matelda as "Grace," and inclines to believe that on earth she was the *donna giovane e di gentile aspetto molto*, whose death is recorded in the *Vita Nuova* (§ 8).

one or other of the ladies in the *Vita Nuova*, has mainly sentimental considerations to recommend it, though it now finds a powerful supporter in Professor Torraca. More recently, we have the interesting and suggestive, but hardly convincing attempt on the part of Carmelo Cazzato to identify Matelda with St. Mary Magdalene. The hypothesis, first brought forward by Lubin and afterwards revived in another form by Preger, is steadily gaining ground at the present day, which connects the presiding spirit of Dante's Earthly Paradise with one or other of the two Mechthilds, two German nuns who lived and wrote in the latter part of the thirteenth century. Like every other theory, it presents considerable difficulties, but it has at least the advantage of calling the attention of students to two very remarkable mystics, whose works show certain striking analogies with the *Divina Commedia*.

II

The elder Mechthild, known as Mechthild of Magdeburg, was born in the first or second decade of the century. From her twelfth year, she began to see visions and receive revelations, in consequence of which she renounced all things, and abandoned her home to live amongst strangers. Taking refuge at Magdeburg, she lived there for many years as a

beguine, in poverty and loneliness, and there, about 1250, she began to write in prose and verse the book known as the "Flowing Light of the Godhead," *Das fliessende Licht der Gottheit*, in the vernacular.[1] In consequence she incurred much persecution, probably from the secular clergy, and became again a wanderer; until at last, when advanced in years, the Abbess Gertrude of Hackeborn received her at Helfta in Saxony—a house of Benedictine nuns who were under Dominican direction. The monastery was a hot-bed of mysticism and visionary experience, and Mechthild was brought closely into touch with two other inmates, both much younger than herself, but of the same highly-strung spiritual temperament: Mechthild of Hackeborn, the sister of the abbess, and the famous St. Gertrude, who was then a mere child. Here the persecuted beguine found a haven of peace, and, after twelve years, she died among the nuns, surrounded by loving friends. The date of her entry into the monastery of Helfta is usually accepted as 1268, but it may have been several years later, and it is clear that she died in the eighties, or early nineties, of the century—while Dante was writing the *Vita Nuova*. The book of her revelations and visions was translated into Latin during her lifetime, entitled *Lux Divinitatis fluens in corda*

[1] *Offenbarungen der Schwester Mechthild von Magdeburg, oder das fliessende Licht der Gottheit*, herausgegeben von P. Gall Morel. Regensburg, 1869.

Veritatis,[1] by a certain Friar Henry, a Dominican, and it is in this Latin form, if at all, that they would have reached Dante.

The keynote of Mechthild's revelations is struck in the words which she makes the soul utter: "I was created in love; therefore nothing can console or liberate my nobleness, save love alone."[2] Like Matelda in the Earthly Paradise, she shows forth this love in gathering flowers:—

"The messenger says to her: 'Thou must purify thyself, besprinkle the dust with water, prepare the bed, and scatter flowers in thy chamber.' The exiled soul answers: 'When I purify, I blush; when I sprinkle, I weep; when I make my bed, I hope; when I gather flowers, I love; when my Lord shall come, I run gladly to meet Him; for there cometh with Him sweet melody, through which all carnal concupiscence dieth within me, and its melody puts far from me all trouble of the heart.'"[3]

A light of utmost splendour glows upon the eyes of her mind. She sees the unmingled joy and living life of eternity, and conceives of the Blessed Trinity as a sacred music, in which the Godhead strikes the note, the Humanity sings, and the Holy Spirit is the harpist; "to which the whole chorus of the elect,

[1] *Sororis Mechtildis Lux Divinitatis fluens in corda Veritatis*, in vol. ii. of the Solesmes edition of the *Revelationes Gertrudianae ac Mechtildianae*.

[2] *Lux Divinitatis*, i. 16. [3] *Ibid.*, i. 15.

whose minds are stretched out in love, harmonises with celestial sound." [1]

At an early stage of her revelations, Mechthild, too, has a momentary vision of a mountain: a mountain of which the root is as a shining cloud, but the summit is fire and bright as the sun; a mountain to contemplate which is blessedness, but upon which the eye cannot look without a seven-fold preparation and purification of the soul. The mountain is not Self-Knowledge or Purgatory, but the height of the Divine Majesty.[2]

"Our God," she writes, "is a consuming fire, ineffably tending upwards above all creatures, endlessly, sweetly, everlastingly burning. As vital heat, holding eternal life in itself, this hath produced all things from itself. The flying sparks of this most ardent fire are the most shining brightnesses of celestial spirits; its rays are the godlike splendours of all the saints, with which, while they lived, they wondrously purified Holy Church. The living coals of this fire are all the just, who, still placed in this life, burn with divine love, and glow by conversation upon their neighbours, and through whom, if the charity of these has grown cold, they are at length, if possible, kindled, and made children of light. The ashes of this fire are the bodies of the saints, who have passed out of this world, who yet sleep in the dust, expecting the blessed hope

[1] *Lux Divinitatis*, i. 15. Cf. *Par.* xxvii. 1-3. [2] *Lux Divinitatis*, i. 4.

and coming of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ." [1]

We are slightly reminded of Dante's conception of the Divine Light penetrating through the universe, of his first sight of the Angels in the ninth sphere and in the Empyrean as *scintille* and *faville vive*, "living sparks," and of the blessed in the spheres appearing as *tanti splendori*, "so many splendours," glowing with the fire of divine love.[2] It remained for St. Catherine of Genoa to extend the image of God as a penetrating and consuming fire, to Purgatory and to Hell itself, "taking the Fire of Hell, the Fire of Purgatory, and the Fire and Light of Heaven as profoundly appropriate symbols or descriptions of the variously painful or joyous impressions produced, through the differing volitional attitudes of souls towards Him, by the one God's intrinsically identical presence in each and all"; God being "the Fire of Pain and the Light of Joy to souls, according as they resist Him or will Him, either here or hereafter." [3]

Mechthild has a symbolical vision of the Church, under its ideal aspect, as a beautiful virgin with whom none can be compared save the Blessed Virgin herself; [4] which, for those who identify her with Dante's Matelda, may explain her pointing out the allegorical pageant in the Earthly Paradise. Afterwards, in another ecstasy, she is rapt above the

[1] *Lux Divinitatis*, i. 3. [2] *Par.* xxxi. 22, xxviii. 88-91, xxx. 64, xxi. 32.
[3] F. von Hügel, *op. cit.*, ii. pp. 215, 218. [4] *Lux Divinitatis*, ii. 14.

choirs of Angels, and sees the throne of God in Paradise:—

"Above the throne of God is nothing, save God, God, God, immense, great God. Above on the throne is seen the Mirror of the Godhead, the Image of the Humanity, the Light of the Holy Spirit. And it is known how three Persons are one God, and how they are joined in One. Of this ineffable matter it is not lawful for me to utter more."

This reads like a crude anticipation of the close of the *Paradiso*. The Blessed Virgin and the Baptist have the same position as in Dante's Empyrean, the latter holding the place above the Seraphim from which Lucifer fell; and "the saints, who now reign with the Lord, are surrounded by one light, steeped in one love, and united in one will."[1] The vision resembles Dante's Empyrean Rose of Paradise more closely than does any previous work of this kind.

Again, Mechthild's attitude towards contemporary history is strikingly analogous with that of Dante. She has the same conception of the special purpose of the institution of the Franciscan and Dominican orders, in relation to their times, as we find in Dante and in Ubertino da Casale, and the same lamentation

[1] *Lux Divinitatis*, ii. 15. Cf. *Par.* iii. 79-81, xxxi. 49-51. Another passage about the Blessed Virgin suggests Dante's *umile ed alta più che creatura* (*Par.* xxxiii. 2): *Porro ejus fruitio et cum Deo unio super omnes creaturas inenarrabilis est; quae quanto hic humilior exstitit, et deiformior, tanto illic excellentior, cunctisque incredibili pulchritudine speciosior invenitur* (*Lux Divinitatis*, i. 19).

over the decay of both.[1] The corruption of the Church moves her to words at times curiously resembling those of the poet. Thus, in one place, she is allowed to offer up the Church to God: "when I had beheld her, the Lord, too, looked upon her, and I blushed exceedingly."[2] Dante may, possibly, have expanded this hint into the lines where, in the Stellar Sphere, all Heaven and Beatrice with it flush red at St. Peter's denunciation of his unworthy successors.[3] In another vision, the pope is at his prayers, and Mechthild hears God admonishing him to reform the Church:—

"Splendid diadem of Holy Church, how art thou become dim with earth, thy brightness with soot; thy precious stones, the rulers and holy doctors, have fallen; the people of God are weakened and scandalised by thy perverse ways. Thy gold hath rotted in the foulness of vices; thou art become exceeding poor, not having the most precious treasure, charity. Thy beauteous face of spotless chastity hath become burnt and blacker than coal in the fire of darkest lust.[4] The building of thy house is fallen, for the foundation of deep humility is overturned through pride. The righteousness of thy truth is brought to nought and has disappeared, lies and wicked falseness are found on thy lips, the flowers of virtue and purity have fallen and festered in thee.

[1] *Lux Divinitatis*, ii. 11.
[2] *Ibid.*, ii. 12.
[3] *Par.* xxvii. 28-34.
[4] Cf. *Par.* xxvii. 136-138.

O chosen crown of God, how art thou bowed down and the beauty of thy countenance departed! There is now no beauty nor comeliness in thee; nor is any strength left, save what is the occasion of thy ruin, to wit, clerical jurisdiction, wherewith thou dost fight against God and His elect, justifying the wicked for gifts, and taking the justice of the just from him.[1] Therefore God hath purposed to humble thee, and His vengeance will come upon thee on a day which thou knowest not, and at a time whereof thou art ignorant. For thus saith the Lord: 'I will open the ear of the sovereign pontiff, and touch his heart with grief and holy zeal; for the shepherds of my sheep from Jerusalem have become robbers and wolves in my sight.[2] They cruelly slay and devour my lambs; the older sheep are sick and feeble, for they call them back from the fruitful pastures and impiously forbid them to feed on the high mountains and green meadows, taking heed with threats and admonitions lest they should be fostered with the sound doctrine and salutary counsels of men illustrious in faith and knowledge. If any one is ignorant of the way to the depths below and would fain know it, let him look at the life and character of the wicked and depraved clerics, who, giving themselves up in their impious custom to luxury and other vices, are hastening without let to Hell. I will gird the Church round

[1] Cf. *Purg.* xvi. 127-129, and *Inf.* xix. 104-105.
[2] Cf. Jeremiah xxiii., and *Par.* xxvii. 55-57.

with preachers in the latter days, and defend her against the frauds and malice of Antichrist. Do thou then, My son, sovereign pontiff who art My vicar on earth, take heed zealously to accomplish these things, so that the days of thy life may be prolonged, and grace be increased in thee: thy predecessors passed away speedily, because they did not fulfil the secret counsel of My will.' Thus I saw the pope at his prayers, and there I heard God speaking these things to him." [1]

Mechthild, like Dante, shows traces of the influence of the Abbot Joachim and his school. A new religious order is to arise in the latter days, of which the founder and first master will be a son of the King of the Romans, and there will be a time of peace and illumination for thirty years, until the coming of Antichrist.[2]

Among her revelations, Mechthild records a vision of Hell and Purgatory. Hell is "the city whose name is Eternal Hatred," built in the abyss, out of the stones laid by the offences of the sinners. Save for the correspondence of sin and punishment, very crudely indicated, it resembles Dante's *Inferno* only in the superficial fashion of the earlier visions.[3] As in these, her Purgatory is at times hardly distinguish-

[1] *Lux Divinitatis*, iii. 7. The pope (if not merely the ideal *papa angelico* of the mediaeval dream) is, perhaps, the saintly Dominican, Innocent V. (1276).

[2] *Ibid.*, iii. 12. This has a certain analogy with Dante's prophecy of the *Veltro* (*Inf.* i. 100-111).

[3] *Lux Divinitatis*, vi. 1-4.

able from Hell, and the purgation of the souls of worldly ecclesiastics is almost identical with the torturing of the barrators by the Malebranche.[1] There is just one episode that suggests Dante's *Purgatorio*. A scholar, who has been cut off by violence in the midst of his sins, is saved because of an internal sigh of repentance at the last (the *una lagrimetta* of Buonconte da Montefeltro), but is doomed to thirty years' purgation, that being the length of time that he had lived alienated from God *per stultam superbiam*, which recalls the prescribed penalty of the shades in the Antepurgatory and the phrase, *in sua presunzion*, on the lips of Manfredi.[2] This, however, is remitted at Mechthild's prayers, the Lord saying: "When two strive together, the weaker must succumb to the stronger. I, albeit I am omnipotent, will to be the weaker." And here we are faintly reminded of the passage where the celestial Eagle speaks to Dante of love and hope conquering the Divine Will:—

> "Non a guisa che l'uomo all'uom sopranza,
> Ma vince lei perchè vuole esser vinta,
> E vinta vince con sua beninanza." [3]

Mechthild has a vision of the Earthly Paradise, anticipating that of Dante in its position:—

[1] *Lux Divinitatis*, vi. 8; *Inf.* xxi., xxii.

[2] *Lux Divinitatis*, vi. 12; *Purg.* iii. 136-141, v. 52-57, 107.

[3] "Not in the guise that man prevails over man, but it conquers It because It wills to be conquered, and, when conquered, conquers with Its own beneficence."—*Par.* xx. 97-99.

"I came to a place midway between this earth and Paradise itself, where I saw trees and foliage and fair grass, but no evil herb. Certain of these trees bore fruit, and many had only sweet-smelling leaves. There flowed rapid rivers of waters, and a wind blew from south to north, and in the waters a certain earthly sweetness was mingled with heavenly delight. The air was more sweet than words can say." [1]

Thus Dante:—

> "Un'aura dolce, senza mutamento
> Avere in sè, mi feria per la fronte
> Non di più colpo che soave vento,
> Per cui le fronde, tremolando pronte,
> Tutte quante piegavano alla parte
> U' la prim'ombra gitta il santo monte." [2]

So, too, Matelda says to Dante of the mystical river of the Earthly Paradise, that it surpasses all other savours: *A tutt' altri sapori esto è di sopra.*[3] Unlike Dante, Mechthild excludes all birds from her Earthly Paradise, and she sees no souls save only Enoch and Elias. The wind that stirs the trees of the holy place is not one that blows on the earth: "The Celestial Paradise is above, and preserves the

[1] *Lux Divinitatis*, vii. 57.

[2] "A soft breeze, that had no change in itself, smote me upon the forehead with no more stroke than a gentle wind,

"For which the boughs, in quivering response, were all of them bending towards that quarter where the holy mountain casts its first shadow."—*Purg.* xxviii. 7-12.

[3] *Purg.* xxviii. 133.

Earthly Paradise from all storms."[1] Even so Matelda to Dante:—

"Perchè il turbar, che sotto da sè fanno
L'esalazion dell'acqua e della terra,
Che, quanto posson, retro al calor vanno,
All'uomo non facesse alcuna guerra,
Questo monte salìo verso'l ciel tanto;
E libero n'è d'indi ove si serra."[2]

III

The younger Mechthild, Mechthild of Hackeborn, born about 1240, and brought up from childhood in the shelter of the cloister, had none of her elder namesake's harsh experiences of life. Her revelations and visions are of a more peaceful, more exclusively devotional character. Unlike those of Mechthild of Magdeburg, they are written in the third person. Taken down at her dictation, they were composed from the outset in Latin, about the year 1291, and it is probable that the form in which they now appear and the book that contains them, the *Liber specialis gratiae*, are to some extent the work of St. Gertrude.[3] Mechthild of Hackeborn died in 1298,

[1] *Lux Divinitatis*, vii. 57.

[2] "In order that the storms, which below it the exhalations of the water and of the earth cause—which, as far as they can, follow after the heat—

"Should wage no war on man, this mountain rose towards heaven so high, and is free from them beyond where it is locked" (*i.e.* above the gate of Purgatory).—*Purg.* xxviii. 97-102.

[3] *Sanctae Mechtildis liber specialis gratiae*, in *Revelationes Gertrudianae ac Mechtildianae*, vol. ii., praefatio, p. iii.

two years before the assumed date of Dante's vision. A prayer of hers, the so-called *Laudes Dominae Mechtildis*, celebrating the five joys of Christ in the Resurrection, is supposed to be *la lauda di donna Matelda* which is mentioned by Boccaccio.[1]

The visions of Mechthild of Hackeborn, which are usually connected with the feasts of the Church, frequently resemble passages or episodes in the *Divina Commedia*.

"On *Esto mihi* Sunday,[2] she heard the Beloved of her soul, Jesus, saying to her in the sweet whisper of love: 'Wilt thou abide with Me on the mountain, these forty days and nights?' And the soul: 'O how gladly, my Lord; this is what I wish, this is what I desire.' Then He showed her a high mountain, of wondrous greatness from the east even to the west, having seven steps by which it was ascended, and seven fountains. And, taking her up, He came to the first step, which was called the step of humility, on which was a fountain of water, washing the soul from all the sins that pride committed. After this they ascended the second, which was called the step of meekness; with the fountain of patience, cleansing the soul from the stains which anger caused. Then ascending to the third, which was called the step of love, there was the fountain of charity,

[1] *Liber specialis gratiae*, i. 19; *Decameron*, vii. 1.

[2] Quinquagesima Sunday, on which the introit at Mass begins *Esto mihi in Deum protectorem*.

in which the soul was washed from all the sins which hatred wrought. On this step God stayed with the soul a little while. Then the soul fell at the feet of Jesus; and forthwith that most sweet organ, the honey-sweet voice of Christ, sounded, saying: *Arise, my love; let Me see thy countenance.* And all the company of Angels and saints, who were on the summit of the mountain, re-echoed the sweet marriage-song of love, with God and in God, as though it were one voice, so sweetly, and accompanied it with such sweet harmony, that human speech suffices not to express it. Next they ascended the fourth, which was called the step of obedience; the fountain was of holiness, cleansing the soul from all things that disobedience did. After this they came to the fifth, which was the step of continence; and the fountain of liberality, purging the soul from all things which avarice committed, for she did not use creatures either for her own utility or for the praise of God as she should have done. And soon, ascending the sixth, which was called that of chastity, they came to the fountain of divine purity, purifying the soul from all the desires wherewith the flesh offended. There the soul saw the Lord and herself clothed alike in white raiment. Thence to the seventh step, which was called spiritual joy; the fountain was heavenly joy, washing the soul from all the sins of sloth; but that fountain did not flow freely like the others, but trickled by little and little, drop by drop; for no one,

as long as he is in this life, can fully attain to heavenly joy; but it is as a drop, or, at least, nothing in comparison with the truth." [1]

This "Mountain of the Virtues" is not Purgatory, which Mechthild describes separately elsewhere; neither are the seven virtues represented by the seven steps or seven stages, nor the seven contrary vices which the seven fountains wash away from the soul, quite the same, or in the same order, as in the *Purgatorio;* but the whole conception is closely analogous with that of Dante's mountain of Purgation, with its seven terraces that purify the souls from the seven capital sins, and the seven Angels personifying the seven opposite virtues. When the mountain is ascended, Mechthild has the vision of Paradise; differing from that of Dante's Empyrean Heaven, among other respects, in the sacramental imagery with which the union with the Divine is represented, and in the stress laid upon the person of Christ as the bridegroom of the soul; but with a certain resemblance in the part assigned to the Blessed Virgin.

"After this, the Beloved with His loved one ascended to the summit of the mountain, where was a multitude of Angels in the guise of birds, having golden bells and giving forth a sweet sound. On that mountain were two thrones, shining with wondrous beauty. The first was the throne and seat

[1] *Liber specialis gratiae*, i. 13.

of the supreme and undivided Trinity, from which proceeded four rivers of living waters. By the first she understood was denoted the divine mercy, whereby He rules the saints, so that they know His will in all things and joyfully fulfil it. By the second, the divine providence, which foresaw all good things for them, wherewith it satisfies them abundantly in eternal liberty.[1] By the third, the divine affluence which inebriates them with all riches, so that it pours forth upon them all good things, more abundantly than they can ever desire. And by the fourth was denoted the divine joy, whereby they live so joyously in God, filled with the fulness of gladness, abounding in the delights whereof there will be no end, where *God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes*. This throne had upon its summit a golden globe filling the orb of the earth with its magnitude, which signified the Godhead; and it was adorned with precious stones and shining wondrously with the purest gold, as the royal edifice of the King of Heaven. It had likewise many tabernacles; to wit, the dwellings of the holy Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, and all the elect. The second throne was that of the Virgin Mother, who, as befits the Queen, resides by merit near her King. This throne, too, had many tabernacles; to wit, of the hand-

[1] Cf. *Par.* xxi. 73-75:—

"Io veggio ben, diss'io, sacra lucerna,
Come libero amore in questa corte
Basta a seguir la provvidenza eterna."

maidens of the Virgin, the holy virgins who worthily follow the Virgin Mother.

"Seeing the King of Glory, Jesus, on the seat of His imperial magnificence, and His Mother at His right hand, and wondering at His most gracious countenance upon which the Angels desire to look, utterly beside herself, she ran before the throne of the Holy Trinity to the feet of Jesus. And the Lord Himself lifted her up, to recline sweetly on His bosom. Now her garment had been for a little besprinkled with dust, through some cause which had occupied her in the evening, and the Blessed Virgin approaching wiped it away. After this, she saw the royal table before the throne, to which all who were receiving the Body of the Lord approached; to whom the Son of the Virgin, serving the most delicate dish of His own blessed Body, offered to each the living and perfect bread; and so the Beloved and His lovers rested in one marriage-bed. The cup was given them to drink of the sweetest wine, to wit, of the Blood of the Immaculate Lamb, in which their hearts were washed from all stains. And there, sweetly inebriated, they are blissfully united to God. Then God said to the soul: 'Now do I give Myself to thy soul, with all the good that I am and that I can give. Thou in Me and I in thee. Never shalt thou be separated from Me.' Then she prayed the Blessed Virgin to praise her Son for her. Who, straightway proceeding from her throne with the

chorus of virgins, magnified her Son with ineffable praise." [1]

Again, on the feast of the Purification, she has a vision of the Blessed Virgin enthroned among the Angels, with Gabriel in front of her, which somewhat resembles the analogous scene in Dante's Empyrean.[2] Mary for her is *mater imperialis*, as for Dante she is *Augusta*, and the imagery with which Mechthild sees her clothed suggests, however faintly, that of the Celestial Rose in which she appears to Dante.[3]

On a certain Sunday, while the *Asperges me* is being sung, the Lord opens to Mechthild the gate of His heart, and shows her a river of living water flowing from the east even to the west, bordered by trees bearing the mystical fruit of the virtues enumerated by the Apostle (Gal. v. 22-23):—

"This water is called the river of charity. The soul entered, and was cleansed from all stains therein. In that river there was a multitude of fishes having golden scales, which signified loving souls, who, severed from all earthly delectations, plunged themselves into the fountain of all good things, that is, into Jesus." [4]

We are reminded at once of Matelda drawing Dante through the *fiume sacro*, when he hears the

[1] *Liber specialis gratiae*, i. 13.
[2] *Ibid.*, i. 12; *Par.* xxxii. 85-99.
[3] *Liber specialis gratiae*, ii. 1; *Par.* xxxii. 119.
[4] *Liber specialis gratiae*, ii. 2. There is, of course, Scriptural authority for the representation of souls as fishes, *e.g.* Ezekiel, xlvii. 9.

Asperges me so sweetly sung,[1] and of the image, in itself a little quaint, but to which Mechthild's words give fresh significance, of the souls in the sphere of Mercury drawing towards Dante and Beatrice like fishes in a fishpond on the appearance of food: *Ecco chi crescerà li nostri amori.*[2] When thus cleansed in the river, Mechthild sees the Church as a garden or vineyard, set with palm-trees and defended by Angels. At another time, she represents herself as led by the Blessed Virgin into the Earthly Paradise, and sees its mystical trees—the tallest of which, that of which Adam ate the fruit, has become the tree of Mercy.[3] Further, Mechthild sees two streams gushing out from the crystalline throne of Christ:—

"From the front of the throne two streams of exceeding purity, and delightful in aspect, went forth; whereof she understood one to be the grace of forgiveness of sins, the other that of spiritual consolation."[4]

There is perfect correspondence between this and the symbolism of the two mystical rivers proceeding from one mystical source, placed upon the lips of Matelda in the Earthly Paradise:—

"L'acqua che vedi non surge di vena
Che ristori vapor che gel converta,
Come fiume ch'acquista e perde lena;

[1] *Purg.* xxxi. 94-99.

[2] *Par.* v. 100-105. The love, and thence the accidental (as distinguished from the essential) blessedness of Paradise, increases with every soul that ascends to share in it. Cf. *Purg.* xv. 52-75, and Hettinger, *Dante's Divina Commedia: its Scope and Value* (ed. Bowden), p. 339.

[3] *Liber specialis gratiae*, iii. 50.

[4] *Ibid.*, ii. 21.

Ma esce di fontana salda e certa,
Che tanto dal voler di Dio riprende,
Quant'ella versa da due parti aperta.
Da questa parte con virtù discende,
Che toglie altrui memoria del peccato;
Dall'altra, d'ogni ben fatto la rende.
Quinci Letè, così dall'altro lato
Eunoè si chiama, e non adopra,
Se quinci e quindi pria non è gustato." [1]

And the correspondence is, perhaps, emphasised further on, by Beatrice herself referring Dante to Matelda for the explanation:—

" Dinanzi ad esse Eufrates e Tigri
Veder mi parve uscir d'una fontana,
E quasi amici dipartirsi pigri.
' O luce, o gloria della gente umana,
Che acqua è questa che qui si dispiega
Da un principio, e sè da sè lontana? '
Per cotal prego detto mi fu: ' Prega
Matelda che il ti dica '; e qui rispose,
Come fa chi da colpa si dislega,
La bella donna: ' Questo ed altre cose
Dette gli son per me; e son sicura
Che l'acqua di Letè non gliel nascose.' " [2]

[1] " The water that thou seest rises not from a spring restored by vapour that cold condenses, like a river that gains and loses current;
" But issues from a fountain unfailing and sure, which by the will of God gains back as much as it pours out when parted into two.
" On this side it descends with virtue that takes from man the memory of sin; on the other, it restores that of every good deed.
" On this Lethe, so upon the other hand Eunoë it is called, and it effects nought, if on this side and on that it is not first tasted."—*Purg.* xxviii. 121-132.

[2] " In front of them Euphrates and Tigris methought I saw issue from one fountain, and separate like friends that linger.
" ' O light, O glory of the human race, what water is this that here flows forth from one source, and self from self doth sever? '
" For such a prayer was said to me: ' Pray Matelda that she

Dante sees a gate on the side of the mountain of Purgatory, with three steps for the ascent, of diverse colours.[1] Mechthild beholds a wonderfully sculptured altar in Heaven, likewise with three steps of diverse colours:—

"There were three steps by which to ascend to that altar. The first of these was golden; by which was declared that no one can come to God unless he ascend by charity. The second step seemed of the colour of the sky; by which was indicated meditation on divine and heavenly things; for needs must he who would fain draw nigh to God be freed from all things of earth, to strive the more frequently to be uplifted by meditation to the things of Heaven. The third step appeared green; by which was signified the lively intention of divine praise; that is, that all our work should be done with such intention, that we should desire the praise and glory of God rather than our own profit and salvation." [2]

Further, Mechthild conceives of an ascent or ladder whereby the soul, even in this life, mounts to an anticipation of the Beatific Vision. It has nine stages, which, like the nine moving spheres of the *Paradiso*, correspond to the nine angelic orders, one of which presides over each. These nine grades are

tell it thee'; and here replied, as doth he who clears himself from blame,

"The fair lady: 'This and other things were told to him by me; and I am sure that Lethe's water did not hide them from him.'"—*Purg.* xxxiii. 112-123.

[1] *Purg.* ix. 76-77, 94-102. [2] *Liber specialis gratiae*, i. 31.

represented by nine classes of souls on earth, who are associated with the several orders; the contemplatives, as in Dante, being in the seventh rank with the order of Thrones. The perfect lovers of God, those who "plunge themselves totally into the eternal fire which is God," reach the goal; "These in the ninth stage, with the Seraphim, between whom and God are no other spirits, approach God immediately." [1]

Mechthild has a vision of the reception of Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas into Paradise:—

"She beheld the souls of Master Albertus and Friar Thomas, as two most noble princes, enter Heaven in this fashion. Two great Angels preceded each, of which one was of the Cherubim, the other of the Seraphim. By the Angels of the Cherubim was signified that on earth they were illumined by divine knowledge; by the Angels of the Seraphim, the special love wherewith they were inflamed towards God, and by which they loved the understanding and the knowledge, divinely given them, as the special gift of God." [2]

St. Benedict figures prominently in her visions.[3] She sees St. Bernard, accompanied by Love "in the aspect of a beautiful maiden," "in token of the special merit which he had, in that he was so full of love, and by his words and writings kindled so many

[1] *Liber specialis gratiae*, i. 30. Cf. St. Gregory, *Homil. in Evangelia*, ii. 34, § 10.

[2] *Liber specialis gratiae*, v. 9. Cf. *Par.* x. 97-99, xi. 37-39.

[3] *Liber specialis gratiae*, i. 13.

to the love of God." [1] This same maiden figure is seen in the heart of God: *Ego sum amor divinus*:—

"And Love said again to the soul: 'Enter into the joy of thy Lord.' At this word she was utterly rapt into God; so that, even as a drop of water poured into wine is all changed to wine, so this blessed soul, passing over into God, was made one spirit with Him. In this union the soul in herself was annihilated; but God, comforting her, said to her: 'I will pour into thee all that man can ever receive, and will multiply My gifts in thee as far as is possible to man.' And Love said: 'Here shalt thou rest and abide in the heart of thy Lover, nor be disquieted by prosperity; here be at peace in remembering the gifts of thy Beloved, nor ever be disquieted by adversity.'" [2]

In accordance with this, in a chapter on free will, under a rather complicated image, she represents the will of man as a wheel, which, when the soul is in the state of grace, revolves in his heart in union with another wheel that is ever revolving in the heart of Christ; [3] an image which appears simplified in the closing lines of the *Paradiso*:—

> "Ma già volgeva il mio disiro e il *velle*,
> Sì come rota ch' egualmente è mossa,
> L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle." [4]

[1] *Liber specialis gratiae*, i. 28.

[2] *Ibid.*, ii. 17. Another vision (*ibid.*, ii. 35) of Love in the same form, but moving round and singing *Gyrum caeli circuivi sola* (Eccli. xxiv. 8), suggests the circling melody of Gabriel as *amore angelico* (*Par.* xxiii. 103-110).

[3] *Liber specialis gratiae*, iv. 20.

[4] "But already my desire and my will were being turned, even as a

Mechthild of Hackeborn

Like Mechthild of Magdeburg, Mechthild of Hackeborn has a vision of Hell and Purgatory. The former she dismisses in a few words, turning in horror from the spectacle of all kinds of terrible beasts tearing and rending each other, and hearing only that these are the souls of those who never remembered God sweetly even for an hour. The Purgatory, too, is a mere sketch; but it a little resembles that of Dante in that, for instance, the souls of those who had taken and not kept the vow of obedience "moved on as though pressed down and bent by a great weight"—which is obviously the purgation of the proud in the *Purgatorio*.[1] Like Dante, and unlike the earlier writers of visions of the other world, Mechthild keeps Hell and Purgatory apart, and we have in her representation the first instance of Angels assisting at the purgatorial process; the conception that throws such heavenly light over the soul's purgation in the seven terraces of the *Purgatorio*: "To the souls not yet purified the Angels minister the light of knowledge, and are their aid and consolation in their pangs."[2] She holds, of course, that the soul that leaves the body free from sin enters the secrets of Heaven at once, and her description of such a death has a certain remote correspondence or analogy with the salutation of "the Love that quieteth

wheel that is moved equally, by the Love that moves the sun and the other stars."—*Par.* xxxiii. 143-145.

[1] *Liber specialis gratiae*, v. 20; *Purg.* x. 130-139.

[2] *Liber specialis gratiae*, v. 21.

this heaven," that greets Dante when he enters the Empyrean:—

"When the soul of the just goeth out of the body, if she be so free from all sins as to merit straightway to enter the secret things of Heaven, in her first going out, God so penetrates that happy soul with His divine power, and so fills and possesses all her faculties, that He Himself is the eye of the soul whereby she sees, and the Light through which she sees, and the Beauty which is seen; so that, in a wondrous and most joyous fashion, God, in the soul and with the soul, beholds Himself and the soul and all the saints." [1]

IV

It will be understood that, in the foregoing pages, I have dwelt less upon those parts of the work of either Mechthild which are specially significant to the student of the "science of love," than upon those that bear upon the *Divina Commedia* and her possible relations with Dante.

For me, the Matelda of the Earthly Paradise now symbolises, not the glorified active life nor temporal felicity, but "affection inflamed by divine inspiration, composing itself to the norm of justice." This office would correspond well with the life and revelations of either Mechthild of Magdeburg or Mechthild

[1] *Liber specialis gratiae*, v. 21. Cf. Jacopone da Todi, *Lauda* lxxxxi., which, however, refers to the soul's ecstasy while still in this life.

of Hackeborn. Francesco d'Ovidio, while still holding that she represents *la felicità terrena*, has given his voice for Mechthild of Hackeborn.[1] The outward aspect of the gracious apparition on the bank of Lethe cannot be said to correspond with that of a nun, who, if Mechthild of Magdeburg, died in old age, or, if Mechthild of Hackeborn, when youth was at least long past; a similar difficulty confronts the supporters of the Countess, but it hardly affects the question; poetical requirements, and the whole atmosphere of the Earthly Paradise of which she is the embodiment, would need such a transformation. For my part, I slightly incline towards Mechthild of Magdeburg, while thinking it probable that the visions and revelations of both, in a fragmentary form, had reached Dante. The divine poet may very possibly have identified the two as one and the same person, and, in any case, would, in all likelihood, have known little of the historical personality of either in her distant German convent, save that she was an adept in that " science of love " that was leading him, too, through purgation and illumination, to the fruition of God.

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 582-584.

CHAPTER IX

THE SCIENCE OF LOVE

I. Man's knowledge of divine things; the mystical significance of noon; the Celestial Ladder; the three modes of the soul's vision. II. The mystical action of the three Theological Virtues; Dante's blindness and the Dark Night of the Soul; the river of peace. III. The consummation of the vision; the purpose of Dante's mysticism.

I

"Man," writes Aquinas, "has three kinds of knowledge of divine things. The first of these is according as man, by the natural light of reason, ascends through creatures into the knowledge of God; the second is in so far as the divine truth, exceeding human understanding, descends to us by way of revelation, not however as though demonstrated to our sight, but as set forth in words to be believed; the third is according as the human mind is elevated to the perfect intuition of the things that are revealed." [1]

We have something analogous to these three kinds of knowledge of divine things in the *Divina Commedia:* Dante is led by the natural light of reason in Vergil through the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*, thus ascending to the knowledge of God through creatures; the divine truth descends to him in the Earthly

[1] *Summa contra Gentiles*, iv. 1.

Paradise by way of revelation in Beatrice, and is set forth in the allegorical pageants; then, in the *Paradiso*, his mind is uplifted by stages to the perfect intuition of the things revealed.

Thus, too, Bonaventura writes of the soul's ascent to God:—

"This is the *three days' journey into the wilderness* (*that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God*, Exod. iii. 18); this is the threefold illumination of one day, whereof the first is as evening, the second as morning, the third as noon; this represents the threefold existence of things, to wit, in matter, in intelligence, and in eternal act; as it is said: *Let there be, he made*, and *it was so* (Gen. i.); this likewise represents the threefold substance in Christ, who is our ladder: to wit, bodily, spiritual, and divine." [1]

It is noon in the Earthly Paradise when Dante drinks of the waters of Eunoë:—

> "E più corrusco, e con più lenti passi,
> Teneva il sole il cerchio di merigge"; [2]

and, where he stands, the southern hemisphere is *tutto bianco*, all illuminated by the midday rays, when Beatrice turns to gaze upon the sun, and Dante is uplifted with her into Heaven.[3] His ascent is thus at noon, not merely because that hour, as he tells us in the *Convivio*, "is the most noble of all the day

[1] *Itinerarium*, i. § 3.

[2] "Both more resplendent, and with slower paces, the sun was holding the meridian circle."—*Purg.* xxxiii. 103-104.

[3] *Par.* i. 43-48.

and has the most virtue";[1] but also because noon has a special significance for the mystics, as representing celestial desire, or divine illumination, or eternity.

We read in the book of Genesis (xviii. 1-2) that the Lord appeared unto Abraham, as *he sat in the tent-door in the heat of the day; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him; and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent-door.* Commenting upon this passage, Richard of St. Victor says:—

"If by the tent we understand the habitation of the human mind, what is that going out, through which he ran to meet the Lord, save the excess of the human mind, through which it is rapt above itself into the mysteries of divine contemplation? . . . What, I ask, is that midday heat, save the heat of burning desire? What is it, save fervid love of truth, desire of the true and supreme Good? . . . Two things, therefore, combined to furnish the occasion of that going out: the excess of spiritual heat and the wonder of the vision. In this wise doth it often happen in the mind of man, that, whilst it burns in the surpassing fire of celestial desire, it merits to behold something from the divine revelation, whereby it is aided to those contemplative excesses."[2]

The Bride cries in the Song of Solomon *Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon;* or, as the Vulgate

[1] *Conv.* iv. 23, 145-147. [2] *Benjamin major*, v. 8.

has it: *where thou liest in the midday* (Cant. i. 6). This noon, according to Bernard, is the revelation of the glory of God, the noon of a day which dawned when the Sun of Justice, announced on earth by Gabriel and born of a Virgin, lived obscured in the world; a day of which the women found the sun already risen, when they came to the sepulchre (the Vulgate reads *orto jam sole* in Mark xvi. 2); a day which knows not an evening:—

"Verily, from then the Sun had risen, and at length, sensibly diffusing its rays over the earth, it began gradually to appear everywhere more brightly and to be felt more fervidly. But however it may wax in heat and in power, may multiply and dilate its rays through all the course of this our mortality (for He *will be with us alway, even to the end of the world*), the Light will nevertheless not come to the meridian, nor be seen yet in that its own fulness, in which it is to be seen afterwards, by those at least to whom He will be vouchsafed in this vision. O very noon, fulness of fervour and of light, abiding of sun, extermination of shadows, drying up of wet places, expulsion of imperfection! O perennial solstice, when day will no longer wear to evening! O noonday light, O spring mildness, O summer beauty, O autumn richness; yea, too, O winter rest and quiet! Or, if thou likest it better, then only *the winter is past and gone* (Cant. ii. 11). Tell me, I say, where is this place of so great brightness and peace

and fulness; that even as Jacob, while still in the body, saw God face to face, and his life was preserved (Gen. xxxii. 30); or surely as Moses saw Him, not through figures and darkly, nor in dreams, like the other prophets, but in a fashion excelling and unexperienced by others, known to himself and to God; or even as Paul was caught up into Paradise and heard unspeakable words, and saw the Lord Jesus Christ with his own eyes: so may I, too, merit through excess of mind to contemplate Thee in Thy light and in Thy beauty, feeding more copiously, resting more securely. For here, too, Thou feedest, but not in saturity, nor may one lie, but needs must abide and watch on account of the fears of the night. Alas! neither clear light, nor full refection, nor safe dwelling; and therefore *tell me where thou feedest, where thou liest in the midday*." [1]

Similarly, St. John of the Cross interprets this noon, *meridies*, as "the midday which is Eternity, where the Father is ever begetting, and the Son ever begotten." [2]

It is noteworthy that Dante's mysticism, especially in the latter cantos of the *Paradiso*, at several points anticipates, or, at least, is illustrated by, that of this great Spanish mystic of the sixteenth century.

On the poet's arrival in the seventh sphere, the sphere in which the contemplatives descend the

[1] *Sermones in Cantica Canticorum*, xxxiii. §§ 6-7.

[2] *Cántico espiritual entre el Alma y Cristo, cancion* i., *declaracion* (trans. David Lewis).

celestial ladder to meet him, the sweet harmony of Paradise, that had hitherto increased in melody from heaven to heaven, is silent, and Beatrice does not smile:—

"Già eran gli occhi miei rifissi al volto
Della mia donna, e l'animo con essi,
E da ogni altro intento s'era tolto;
E quella non ridea, ma: 'S'io ridessi,'
Mi cominciò, 'tu ti faresti quale
Fu Semelè, quando di cener fêssi;
Chè la bellezza mia, che per le scale
Dell'eterno palazzo più s'accende,
Com' hai veduto, quanto più si sale,
Se non si temperasse, tanto splende,
Che il tuo mortal potere al suo fulgore
Sarebbe fronda che tuono scoscende.'" [1]

Benvenuto da Imola aptly refers to the Vulgate version of Proverbs (xxv. 27): *He that is a searcher of majesty, shall be overwhelmed by glory.* According to John of the Cross, there is a stage in the mystic's upward progress in which the body is said to be unable to bear as yet any further revelation of the Divine. Thus the Bride in the Song of Solomon: *Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me;* or, as the Vulgate has it: *for they have made me flee away* (Cant. vi. 5, or 4):—

[1] "Already were mine eyes fixed again upon the face of my lady, and my mind with them, and from all other intent was it withdrawn;
"And she smiled not, but: 'If I smiled,' she began, 'thou wouldst become such as did Semele when she turned to ashes;
"'For my beauty, which along the stairs of the eternal palace enkindles more, as thou hast seen, the more we ascend,
"'If it were not tempered, gloweth so, that thy mortal power at its effulgence would be a leaf that thunder shatters.'"—*Par.* xxi. 1-12.

"Amid fervent affections of love, the Beloved is wont to visit His bride, tenderly, lovingly, and with great strength of love. . . . And, as the soul has so anxiously longed for the divine eyes, the Beloved reveals to her some glimpses of His Majesty and Godhead, according to her desires. These divine rays strike the soul so profoundly and so vividly, that it is rapt into an ecstasy, which in the beginning is attended with great suffering and natural fear. . . . For such is the wretchedness of our mortal nature, that we cannot bear, even when it is offered to us, but at the cost of our life, that which is the very life of the soul, and the object of her earnest desires, namely the knowledge of the Beloved. Thus the soul is compelled to say, with regard to the eyes so earnestly, so anxiously sought for, and in so many ways, when they become visible: *Turn them away.* So great, at times, is the suffering of the soul during these ecstatic visitations that, were it not for the special interference of God, death would ensue." [1]

We have, too, in John of the Cross, the mystical interpretation of the ladder that Dante now sees in this sphere of Saturn:—

"Dentro al cristallo, che il vocabol porta,
Cerchiando il mondo, del suo chiaro duce,
Sotto cui giacque ogni malizia morta,
Di color d'oro in che raggio traluce,
Vid'io uno scaleo eretto in suso
Tanto, che nol seguiva la mia luce.

[1] *Declaracion del Cántico espiritual,* cancion xiii. (Lewis).

Vidi anche per li gradi scender giuso
Tanti splendor, ch'io pensai ch'ogni lume
Che par nel ciel quindi fosse diffuso." [1]

John of the Cross shows how secret contemplation is a ladder by which, without knowing how, the soul ascends, and mounts upward to the knowledge and possession of the goods and treasures of Heaven. "We may also call it a ladder," he says, "for as the steps of one and the same ladder serve to descend as well as to ascend by, so, too, those very communications, which the soul receives in secret contemplation, raise her up to God and make her humble." And again: "The chief reason why it is called a ladder is that contemplation is the science of love, which is an infused loving knowledge of God, and which enlightens the soul, and at the same time kindles within her the fire of love, till she shall ascend upwards step by step unto God, her Creator; for it is love only that unites the soul and God." [2]

It is thus by this "science of love" that Beatrice impels Dante to follow the contemplatives upward to the eighth heaven:—

"La dolce donna dietro a lor mi pinse
Con un sol cenno su per quella scala,
Sì sua virtù la mia natura vinse;

[1] "Within the crystal, that bears the name, as it wheels round the world, of its famed ruler under whom all wickedness lay dead.

"Of colour of gold on which a ray is glowing, I saw a ladder uplifted on high, so far that my sight followed it not.

"I saw, too, descending downward by the steps so many splendours, that I thought that every star that shines in heaven had been thence diffused."—*Par.* xxi. 25-33.

[2] *Noche escura del Alma*, lib. ii. cap. 18 (Lewis).

Nè mai quaggiù, dove si monta e cala
Naturalmente, fu sì ratto moto,
Ch'agguagliar si potesse alla mia ala." [1]

Aquinas teaches that the human mind is divinely caught up to contemplate divine truth in three ways: first, that it may contemplate it by kinds of likenesses in the imagination; secondly, that it may contemplate it through effects apprehended by the understanding; thirdly, that it may contemplate it in its essence. To contemplate divine truth in this last fashion, St. Paul was *caught up to the third heaven.* In one sense, this third heaven may be taken as meaning the Empyrean Heaven, "the spiritual heaven where Angels and holy souls enjoy the contemplation of God"; it is called "the third heaven," with respect to the aerial heaven and the stellar heaven, or with respect to the crystalline; Paul's being *caught up* into it signifying "that God showed him the life in which He is to be seen in Eternity." In another way, by the third heaven can be understood some supermundane vision; whether "according to the order of the cognitive powers," in which the first heaven is the supermundane corporeal vision which is received through sense, the second heaven is an imaginary vision, and the third heaven is intellectual vision; or "accord-

[1] "The sweet lady impelled me after them with a single sign up by that stairway, so did her power surpass my nature;

"Nor ever here below, where one mounts and descends naturally, was so swift a motion that it could be equalled to my flight."—*Par.* xxii. 100-105.

ing to the order of things knowable," in which the first heaven means the knowledge of celestial bodies, the second heaven, knowledge of celestial spirits, and the third heaven, knowledge of God Himself.[1]

It has recently been argued that Dante's three grades of knowledge of heavenly things in the *Paradiso* are based upon this distinction of the three heavens by Aquinas; the eight lower spheres representing the first heaven, supermundane corporeal vision, the knowledge of the celestial bodies; the ninth sphere, the crystalline or *primum mobile*, corresponding to the second heaven, imaginary vision, the knowledge of the celestial spirits; and the Empyrean being the third heaven, intellectual vision, the knowledge of God Himself.[2] After being rapt up the sacred ladder of contemplation, Dante completes his knowledge of the celestial bodies, when, at Beatrice's bidding, he looks down upon the universe, turning back with his sight " through all and each of the seven spheres," and all the seven are displayed to him, " how great they are, and how swift they are, and how far apart they are in orbits "; [3] he perfects this knowledge, when he realises the spiritual nature of their work, beholding " the hosts of Christ's triumph, and all the fruit gathered by the circling of these spheres." [4]

[1] *Summa Theologica*, II. ii., q. 175, a. 3, ad 1 and ad 4. Cf. Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram*, xii. 28.

[2] Cf. L. Filomusi-Guelfi, *Studi su Dante*, pp. 142 *et seq.*; Umberto Cosmo, in *Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana*, vol. lviii., pp. 165-170.

[3] *Par.* xxii. 133-150.

[4] *Par.* xxiii. 19-21.

In this eighth sphere, corporeal vision may be said to end, as it is the highest visible part of the heavens. Then, in the ninth sphere, which is invisible, he gains by imaginary vision the knowledge of the angelic hierarchies. Finally, in the Empyrean, the knowledge of God Himself in His essence is vouchsafed to his intellectual vision.

II

Dante's examination on Faith, Hope, and Charity, in the Stellar Heaven, is an essential part of his mystical system. "By these three virtues," he says, "we ascend to philosophise in that celestial Athens, where Stoics and Peripatetics and Epicureans, by the art of the eternal Truth, harmoniously concur in one will." [1] And, again, he states that to the blessedness of eternal life, which consists in the fruition of the countenance of God, man can only arrive by spiritual teaching transcending human reason, to be followed in accordance with Faith, Hope, and Charity.[2] These virtues are a gift of God, involving a certain participation in the Deity, to put man on the way to the happiness which exceeds his nature, but for which he is nevertheless made.[3]

But there is a fuller mystical significance in the poet's examination as the necessary preparation for

[1] *Conv.* iii. 14, 136-141. [2] *Mon.* iii. 16, 48-52, 58-63.
[3] *Summa Theologica*, I. ii., q. 62, a. 1.

the fruition of God: especially in this eighth sphere, which is the celestial counterpart of the Earthly Paradise,[1] and in which he has just seen the first vision of Christ as the Sun from which the saints receive their light. Thus Bonaventura:—

"It is necessary, if we would enter Paradise and the fruition of the Truth, that we should advance by Faith, Hope, and Charity respecting the mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ, who is *as the tree of life in the midst of paradise* (Gen. ii. 9, Prov. iii. 18). The image of our mind must therefore be clothed with the three theological virtues, whereby the mind is *purified*, *illumined*, and *rendered perfect*, and thus the image is reformed and made fitted for the Jerusalem which is above, and a part of the Church militant, which is the child, according to the Apostle, of the heavenly Jerusalem. For he says: *Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all* (Gal. iv. 26)."

And the Seraphical Doctor continues that, when the soul believes in, hopes in, and loves Jesus Christ, who is *the way, the truth, and the life* (John xiv. 6), she recovers all her spiritual senses: spiritual hearing and sight, by Faith; spiritual smell, by Hope; spiritual taste and touch, by Charity; and so attains the bliss of that degree of contemplation, *which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it* (Rev. ii. 17).[2]

[1] Cf. my *Dante's Ten Heavens*, pp. 189 *et seq.*
[2] *Itinerarium*, iv. §§ 2-3.

The interaction of the three powers of the soul in contemplation is emphasised by the mystics. Thus St. Catherine of Siena:—

"Love harmonises the three powers of our soul, and binds them together. The will, with ineffable love, follows what the eye of the understanding has beheld; and, with its strong hand, it stores up in the memory the treasure that it draws from this love." [1]

And again, she represents God speaking to the soul of the after-effects of the momentary divine union:—

"Then is the memory found full of nought but Me; the understanding uplifted to contemplate My truth as object; the will, that follows the understanding, loves and unites itself to what the eye of the understanding sees." [2]

Now St. John of the Cross teaches that, for this divine union, the three powers of the soul—understanding, memory, and will—must be rendered empty by the three theological virtues, each in its own power; Faith in the understanding, Hope in the memory, and Charity in the will:—

"It is necessary for the soul, if she will travel securely along the spiritual road, to journey in the dark night, leaning on these three virtues, which make her empty of all things and blind. For the soul is not united to God in this life by the understanding or feeling or imagination, or any other sense whatever; but only by Faith, in the understanding; by

[1] Letter 172. [2] *Dialogo*, cap. lxxix.

Hope, which may be referred to the memory, in so far as Hope relates to that emptiness and forgetfulness of every temporal and perishable thing which it causes, the soul preserving herself entire for the Supreme Good for which she hopes; and by Love, in the will. These three virtues render empty all the powers of the soul; Faith makes the understanding empty and blind; Hope takes everything away from the memory; and Charity detaches the will from every pleasure and affection which is not God." [1]

"We have to lead these three powers of the soul unto these three virtues; informing the understanding by Faith, stripping the memory of all that it possesses by Hope, and informing the will by Charity, detaching them from, and making them blind to, all that is beside these three virtues." [2]

Thus, Dante represents himself as temporarily blinded during his examination: a blindness which he is bidden to compensate by discoursing upon love, and which the eyes of Beatrice have power to heal:—

"Quale è colui ch'adocchia, e s'argomenta
Di vedere eclissar lo sole un poco,
Che per veder non vedente diventa;
Tal mi fec'io a quell'ultimo foco.

. . . . .

"Ahi quanto nella mente mi commossi,
Quando mi volsi per veder Beatrice,
Per non poter vedere, ben ch'io fossi
Presso di lei, e nel mondo felice!

. . . . . .

[1] *Subida del Monte Carmelo*, lib. ii. cap. 6 (Lewis). [2] *Ibid.*

"Mentr'io dubbiava per lo viso spento,
Della fulgida fiamma che lo spense
Uscì un spiro che mi fece attento,
Dicendo: 'In tanto che tu ti risense
Della vista che hai in me consunta,
Ben è che ragionando la compense.
Comincia dunque, e di' ove s'appunta
L'anima tua, e fa' ragion che sia
La vista in te smarrita e non defunta;
Perchè la donna, che per questa dia
Region ti conduce, ha nello sguardo
La virtù ch'ebbe la man d'Anania.'
Io dissi: 'Al suo piacere e tosto e tardo
Vegna rimedio agli occhi, che fûr porte,
Quand'ella entrò col foco ond'io sempr'ardo.'"[1]

"To suffer darkness is the way to great light," writes John of the Cross. "The soul draws nearer and nearer to the divine union in darkness. If the soul will see, she thereby becomes instantly more blind as to God than he who should attempt to gaze upon the sun shining in its strength." This blind-

[1] "As is he who fixes his eyes and strives to see the sun eclipsed a while, and by gazing becomes bereft of sight;

"Such became I at this last flame (St. John) . . .

"Ah, how much was I disturbed in mind, when I turned me to see Beatrice, for that I could not see her, albeit I was near unto her and in the blessed world! . . .

"Whilst I was in suspense because of my quenched sight, from the glowing flame that quenched it issued a breath that made me give heed,

"Saying: 'Until thou dost regain the sense of sight that thou hast consumed in me, it is well that thou compensate it by discourse.

"'Begin then, and say to what thy soul doth tend, and be assured that the sight in thee is confounded and not dead;

"'For the lady, who is leading thee through this divine realm, hath in her look the virtue that the hand of Ananias had.'

"I said: 'At her pleasure, or soon or late, may healing come to the eyes, which were the gates, when she entered with the fire wherewith I ever burn.'"—*Par.* xxv. 118-121, 136-139, xxvi. 1-15.

ness of Dante corresponds with what the great Spanish mystic calls "the dark night through which the soul passes, on her way to the divine light of the perfect union of the love of God." In this dark night of the soul, "God secretly teaches the soul and instructs her in the perfection of love, without efforts on her own part beyond a loving attention to God, listening to His voice and admitting the light He sends." [1]

As he enters the Empyrean, Dante, in preparation for the divine union, is again momentarily blinded by the divine light that shines round him and overpowers him with its glow:—

"Come subito lampo che discetti
Gli spiriti visivi, sì che priva
Dell'atto l'occhio di più forti obbietti;
Così mi circonfulse luce viva,
E lasciommi fasciato di tal velo
Del suo fulgor, che nulla m'appariva.
'Sempre l'amor che queta questo cielo,
Accoglie in sè con sì fatta salute,
Per far disposto a sua fiamma il candelo.'
Non fûr più tosto dentro a me venute
Queste parole brevi, ch'io compresi
Me sormentar di sopra a mia virtute;
E di novella vista mi raccesi,
Tale che nulla luce è tanto mera,
Che gli occhi miei non si fosser difesi.
E vidi lume in forma di riviera,
Fulvido di fulgore, intra due rive
Dipinte di mirabil primavera." [2]

[1] *Carta* i.; *Subida del Monte Carmelo*, lib. ii. cap. 4; *Noche escura del Alma*, lib. ii. cap. 5 (Lewis).

[2] "As sudden lightning-flash that scatters the visual spirits, so that it deprives the eye of action towards the strongest objects;
"So shined round about me a living light, and left me swathed

The image of a river or torrent is one employed by the mystics to represent the first apprehension of the Divine by the soul in the stage of union. Thus, John of the Cross makes the soul say that her Beloved is " the sonorous rivers." The soul, he writes, " feels herself to be so overpowered with the torrent of the spirit of God, and so overwhelmingly possessed by it, that all the waters in the world seem to her to have surrounded her, and to have drowned all her former actions and passions. And, though overwhelming, yet there is nothing painful in it, for these rivers are rivers of peace, as God gives us to understand through Isaiah, saying: *I will bring upon her as it were a river of peace, and glory as an overflowing torrent* (lxvi. 12). Thus this divine overpowering, like sonorous rivers, fills the soul with peace and glory." [1]

III

In the Empyrean, Dante has reached the last, the tenth step of the mystical ladder according to John of the Cross, the step on which " the soul becomes

with such a veil of its effulgence, that nought appeared unto me.

" ' Ever the Love that quieteth this heaven welcomes into itself with such a salutation, to make the candle apt unto its flame.'

" No sooner had these brief words entered in me, than I perceived that I was surpassing my own power;

" And with so new a faculty of sight was I enkindled, that no light is so resplendent that mine eyes could not have sustained it.

" And I saw light in form of a river, glowing with radiance, between two banks adorned with wondrous flowers of spring."—*Par.* xxx. 46-63.

[1] *Declaracion del Cántico espiritual,* cancion xiv.

wholly assimilated unto God because of the clear vision which she then enjoys; for having come in this life to the ninth step, she goeth forth out of the body. Love works in such souls—they are few and perfectly purified in this life—that which Purgatory works in others in the next." In this state, he says, the soul not only becomes like unto God, but is, by participation, God.[1]

Discussing the question, "whether Paul, when caught up, saw the essence of God," Aquinas says:—

"The Divine Essence cannot be seen by a created intellect, save through the light of glory, concerning which it is said in the Psalm (xxxv. 10, or xxxvi. 9): *In thy light shall we see light.* This, however, can be participated in two ways: in the one, by way of it becoming the immanent form (of the intellect); and thus it makes the saints blessed in Paradise; in the other, by way of a certain passing passion, as we have said concerning the light of prophecy; and, in this latter way, that light was in Paul when he was caught up. And, therefore, by such a vision he was not blessed absolutely, so that it overflowed to his body, but only relatively; and therefore such a *being caught up* pertains in some sort to prophecy."[2]

Now although, in the literal sense, the subject of the *Paradiso* is "the state of blessed souls after death," *status animarum beatarum post mortem*,[3] the

[1] *Noche escura del Alma*, lib. ii. cap. 20.
[2] *Summa Theologica*, II. ii., q. 175, a. 3, ad 2. Cf. q. 171, a. 2.
[3] *Epist.* x. 11.

consummation of the poet's own vision, as far as he himself is concerned, is something different. His vision of the Divine Essence, through the light of glory, is what Aquinas calls "by way of a certain passing passion," and "pertains in some sort to prophecy." It does not represent the final condition of the soul in Paradise (*in patria*) awaiting the resurrection of the body, but the anticipation of the Beatific Vision mystically granted to contemplative spirits while still in the flesh on earth; a state in which the soul, in mystical fashion, through the purification wrought by love, is spoken of as going forth out of the body; a state to which she has been led by love alone; a state in which she has become so flooded and so utterly permeated by her realisation of the Divine, that, by an intellectual vision within herself, she becomes actually one with God, united to His Word in spiritual marriage or in the anticipation of the vision of His Essence.[1] Although we naturally speak of "ecstatic" contemplation in connection with the close of the poet's pilgrimage, it need not be supposed that he regards "ecstasy" as the normal state of souls who possess the Beatific Vision. When, in the course of the poem, we find Dante passing into what may be called the ecstatic condition, it is (in a way) the penalty of the flesh; it is a condition only applicable to the soul of the contemplative while he is still in this life. The

[1] Cf. St. Teresa, *El Castillo interior, Moradas sétimas*, cap. ii.

complete absorption of the soul into God, in which is found the blessedness of Heaven, brings with it a consciousness of its own, in virtue of which the saints in the *Paradiso*, while possessing for ever that vision of the Divine Essence which, for a brief moment, will be Dante's at the close of the poem, are realising their own blessedness and the perfect fulfilment of their true nature, and are not for an instant turning their spiritual gaze from that Beatific Vision, albeit they speak with the poet and even descend to meet him in the lower spheres.[1] But with Dante himself it is necessarily different, by reason of *lo mortal pondo*, "the mortal weight through which thou shalt again return below."[2] It is not by this complete absorption into God, attended by perfect spiritual consciousness, that he attains to "the end of all desires," but by that supreme grade of contemplation described by Richard of St. Victor as *alienation of mind*, "when the memory of things present falls from the mind, and, being transfigured by the working of divine grace, the soul passes into a certain wondrous state inaccessible to human powers":—

"When the soul has begun through pure understanding to pass out of herself, and entirely to enter into that brightness of incorporeal light, and to draw some taste of intimate sweetness from what she sees in its depths, then, indeed, in this excess of mind that peace is found and obtained which is without

[1] Cf. Tyrrell, *op. cit.*, pp. 306-309. [2] *Par.* xxvii. 64-65.

disturbance or fear; *and there is silence in heaven, as it were for half an hour;* so that the soul of the contemplative may be disturbed by no tumult of discordant thoughts." [1]

For this "flight of the alone to the Alone," in this mystical "half-hour" of silence, this "moment of understanding," guidance is no longer needed by the purified soul:—

"Ed io ch'al fine di tutti i disii
M'appropinquava, sì com'io dovea,
L'ardor del desiderio in me finii.
Bernardo m'accennava, e sorridea,
Perch'io guardassi suso; ma io era
Già per me stesso tal qual ei volea;
Chè la mia vista, venendo sincera,
E più e più entrava per lo raggio
Dell'alta luce, che da sè è vera." [2]

The "end of all desires," the realising of the soul's entire capacity of knowledge and of love, is attained in that moment when the poet can say of himself: *Io giunsi l'aspetto mio col valor infinito*, "I united my gaze with the infinite Worth":—

"O abbondante grazia, ond'io presunsi
Ficcar lo viso per la luce eterna
Tanto, che la veduta vi consunsi!

[1] *Benjamin major*, v. 2; *De exterminatione mali*, iii. 18.

[2] "And I who to the end of all desires was drawing near, even as I was bound, fulfilled the ardour of desire within me.

"Bernard signed to me, and smiled, that I should look above; but I was already of myself even as he did wish;

"For my sight, becoming pure, was entering more and more through the ray of that high Light, which in itself is true."—*Par.* xxxiii. 46-54.

Nel suo profondo vidi che s'interna,
Legato con amore in un volume,
Ciò che per l'universo si squaderna;
Sustanzia ed accidenti e lor costume,
Quasi conflati insieme per tal modo,
Che ciò ch'io dico è un semplice lume.
La forma universal di questo nodo
Credo ch'io vidi, perchè più di largo,
Dicendo questo, mi sento ch'io godo.

. . . . .

" A quella luce cotal si diventa,
Che volgersi da lei per altro aspetto
È impossibil che mai si consenta;
Però che il ben, ch'è del volere obbietto,
Tutto s'accoglie in lei, e fuor di quella
È difettivo ciò che lì è perfetto." [1]

Thus, in the Dionysian phrase, " ascending from obscure images to the Cause of all, and contemplating, with supermundane eyes, all things in the Cause of all," this Cause itself, in a flash of supernatural intuition, becomes revealed as the Blessed Trinity, of which the second Person (the " reflected,"

[1] " O grace abundant, by which I presumed to fix my gaze through the eternal Light so far that I consumed my power of vision therein!

" Within its depths I saw contained, bound by love into one volume, what is dispersed in leaves throughout the universe;

" Substance and accidents and their relation, as it were fused together in such fashion that what I speak of is one simple light.

" The universal form of this union I believe that I saw, because more copiously, in saying this, I feel that I rejoice. . . .

" At that light such doth one become that to turn from it, to behold ought else, it is impossible that ever one consent;

" Because the Good, which is object of the will, is all contained therein, and, outside of that, all is defective which there is perfect."—*Par.* xxxiii. 82-93, 100-105.

The last two terzine are a poetical paraphrase of Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I. ii., q. 5, a. 4.

"understood," light, that is, the begotten Word) took human flesh: the supreme mystery of the Catholic Faith:—

"Non perchè più ch'un semplice sembiante
Fosse nel vivo lume ch'io mirava,
Che tal è sempre qual era davante;
Ma per la vista che s'avvalorava
In me guardando, una sola parvenza,
Mutandom'io, a me si travagliava;
Nella profonda e chiara sussistenza
Dell'alto lume parvemi tre giri
Di tre colori e d'una continenza;
E l'un dall'altro, come Iri da Iri,
Parea riflesso, e il terzo parea foco
Che quinci e quindi egualmente si spiri.
O quanto è corto il dire, e come fioco
Al mio concetto, e questo a quel ch'io vidi
È tanto, che non basta a dicer poco!
O luce eterna, che sola in te sidi,
Sola t'intendi, e, da te intelletta
Ed intendente te, ami ed arridi!
Quella circulazion, che sì concetta
Pareva in te come lume riflesso,
Dagli occhi miei alquanto circonspetta,
Dentro da sè del suo colore stesso
Mi parve pinta della nostra effige,
Per che il mio viso in lei tutto era messo.
Qual è 'l geometra che tutto s'affige
Per misurar lo cerchio, e non ritrova
Pensando quel principio ond'egli indige;
Tale era io a quella vista nuova:
Veder voleva, come si convenne
L'imago al cerchio, e come vi s'indova;
Ma non eran da ciò le proprie penne,
Se non che la mia mente fu percossa
Da un fulgore, in che sua voglia venne.

All'alta fantasia qui mancò possa;
Ma già volgeva il mio disiro e il *velle*,
Sì come rota ch'egualmente è mossa,
L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle." [1]

The ultimate source of this image of the wheel, as picturing the soul's relations with God, is probably to be found in Ezekiel's vision of the four living creatures and the wheels of the divine chariot. *Cumque ambularent animalia, ambulabant pariter et rotae juxta ea; et cum elevarentur animalia de terra, elevabantur simul et rotae. Quocumque ibat spiritus,*

[1] " Not because more than one simple semblance was in the living Light upon which I gazed, which is ever such as it was before;

" But through my sight gaining strength in me as I looked, one sole appearance, even as I changed, was changing unto me;

" Within the deep and clear subsistence of the high Light appeared to me three circles, of three colours and of one dimension;

" And the one by the other, as rainbow by rainbow, seemed reflected, and the third seemed fire which from one and the other equally is breathed.

" O how scanty is my speech, and how feeble to my conception, and this to what I saw is such that it suffices not to call it little!

" O Light Eternal, that only in Thyself abidest, only understandest Thyself (begetting the Word), and, understood by Thyself (the Son) and understanding Thyself (the Father), dost love and smile (the Holy Ghost proceeding from both)!

" That circle, which seemed begotten in Thee as a reflected light, when contemplated by mine eyes a while,

" Within itself of its own colour appeared to me depicted with our likeness, wherefore my gaze was utterly fixed thereon.

" As is the geometrician who concentrates his mind to square the circle, and finds not in his thought that principle which he needs,

" Such was I at this new vision: fain would I see how the image (our humanity) was united to the circle (the divinity), and how it findeth place therein;

" But unequal to that were mine own wings, were it not that my mind was smitten by a flash, in which its will was fulfilled.

" To my high fantasy here power failed; but already my desire and my will were being turned, even as a wheel that is moved equally, by the Love that moves the sun and the other stars."—*Par.* xxxiii. 109-145.

illuc eunte spiritu, et rotae pariter elevabantur sequentes eum, spiritus enim vitae erat in rotis (Ezek. i. 19-20).[1] With Dante, it symbolises the spiritual harmony attained in perfect correspondence with the working of divine grace, the absolute assimilation of the powers of the soul with the Divine Will. We have found a similar image in the book of Mechthild of Hackeborn; so, too, the later, fourteenth-century writer, Walter Hilton, mystically interprets the Prophet's words: "By wheels are understood the true lovers of Jesus, for they are round in virtue, without angle of frowardness; and lightly whirling through readiness of will after the stirrings of grace; for according as grace stirreth and teacheth, so they follow and work." [2]

Here is symbolism still, inevitably, with imagery in which *fantasia*, the imagination, still asserts its claim, though but as servant, upon the pure understanding. But never, before or since, in poetry has finite human language come so near to the adequate expression of the divine, the infinite, the eternal, as in this closing canto of the *Paradiso*. And yet, when all is said, the fact remains that, if (as has been assumed throughout these pages) the Letter to Can

[1] *And when the living creatures went, the wheels also went together by them; and when the living creatures were lifted up from the earth, the wheels also were lifted up with them. Whithersoever the spirit went, thither, as the spirit went, the wheels also were lifted up withal, and followed it; for the spirit of life was in the wheels* (Vulgate).

[2] *The Ladder of Perfection*, II. part iii. cap. 14. Cf. St. Gregory, *Homiliarum in Ezechielem*, i. 7.

Grande is really his, Dante himself would lay less stress upon the mystical aspect of the poem than upon its direct bearing on life and conduct: *non ad speculandum, sed ad opus incoeptum est totum ;* " not for speculation, but for practical effect was the whole work undertaken " — for " the end of the whole and of the part is to remove those living in this life from the state of misery, and to lead them to the state of felicity." [1] With St. Catherine of Siena, the immediate object of the mystical life is spiritual virility; and " there can be no perfect virtue, none that bears fruit, unless it be exercised by means of our neighbour." [2] Similarly, the aim of Dante's mysticism is to make spiritual experience a force for the reformation of mankind. Depicting man and nature in their eternal aspect, he would speak in their own language to those subjected to things of time on " the threshing-floor that maketh us so fierce," *l'aiuola che ci fa tanto feroci*, and assailed by " our tempest," *nostra procella*, of succession; [3] he would interpret for them the meaning of that Eternity, of which the last of the Roman philosophers dreamed in his dungeon as " the complete and perfect simultaneous possession of unlimited life."

[1] *Epist.* x. 15-16. [2] *Dialogo*, cap. i.-cap. viii., cap. xi.
[3] *Par.* xxii. 151, xxxi. 30.

APPENDIX

I

DANTE AND ST. PETER CELESTINE

It may now be taken for granted that the unnamed soul whom Dante sees and recognises in the *buia campagna* that forms the vestibule of Hell, chief among those whom Mercy and Justice alike disdain, is Pier da Morrone; the saintly hermit who was constrained to ascend the papal throne as Celestine V., and whose abdication (1294) made way for the stormy pontificate of Boniface VIII., and who was raised to the altars by Clement V. as St. Peter Celestine (1313): a mystic *tra la perduta gente*:—

> " Poscia ch'io v'ebbi alcun riconosciuto,
> Vidi e conobbi l'ombra di colui
> Che fece per viltà lo gran rifiuto.
> Incontanente intesi, e certo fui,
> Che quest'era la setta dei cattivi
> A Dio spiacenti ed ai nemici sui." [1]

Tommaseo pointed out the concentrated contempt underlying Dante's words; " Appena visto Celestino, intende di *certo* quella essere la schiera de' vili. Quanto veleno in quell' *incontanente* e in quel *certo!* " [2] The ideal commentary upon the poet's lines is afforded by the satire of Jacopone da Todi: *Que farai, Pier da Morrone;* written before the abdication, and deploring that the word of assent to his elevation had issued from the hermit's lips.[3] But I am not here

[1] *Inf.* iii. 58-63. [2] *Comento,* 1st ed., i. p. 29. [3] *Lauda* liiij.

concerned with a comparison between the treatment of Celestine by Dante, Jacopone, and Ubertino da Casale, respectively; nor with an examination of the question whether (if, as is doubtful, this canto of the *Inferno* was written after May, 1313) Dante could, consistently with Catholic orthodoxy, thus condemn a canonised saint to Hell.[1] I wish simply to suggest what, as far as I know, is a new explanation of Dante's words: *vidi e conobbi.*

Francesco d'Ovidio holds that " troppa importanza fu data al fatto che il poeta dica d'aver ravvisata da sè l'ombra del gran vigliacco." He points out that Dante might possibly have seen Celestine at Naples in 1294, or have known the aspect of the ex-pope from a portrait, and, in any case, nothing need have prevented him from implying that he had in some way known his features on earth, or that some sign in Hell led him to the intuition that this soul was he.[2] I venture to suggest that there is a deeper significance in Dante's words, and that *vidi e conobbi* is intended to imply that he saw, and at once knew, one whom he had never seen in the flesh on earth.

We possess a wonderfully vivid life of Celestine, composed between 1303 and 1306, by his disciple, Tommaso da Sulmona, which has been printed by the Bollandists.[3] This Tommaso was one of the witnesses before Clement V. in 1306, when the preliminary process for the canonisation began. According to him, one of the miracles that attended Celestine

[1] Cf. Tocco, *Quel che non c'è nella Divina Commedia,* pp. 81-88.

[2] *Studii sulla Divina Commedia,* pp. 418-422. Cf. Francesco Torraca (*La D. C. nuovamente commentata,* p. 21): " *Vidi* è dell'occhio, *conobbi* della mente. Si può intendere: Capii che fosse. Trovo, però, che Pier da Morrone fu in Toscana nel 1280, quando Dante aveva quindici anni."

[3] *Vie et miracles de S. Pierre Célestin par deux de ses disciples,* in *Analecta Bollandiana,* tom. xvi.

after he had made his *renuntiatio* was that he was instantly recognised, as he fled from the agents of his successor, even by those who had never seen him before:—

"Audiverat iste vir sanctus quandam silvam in partibus Apuliae, ubi multi boni servi Dei erant; et deliberavit illuc ire, dicens: *Forte ibi requiescam.* Et deposuit cucullam induitque se vilissima chlamyde, et assumpsit secum unum de fratribus suis nocte, et fugit ad silvam, quam praediximus, quae distabat a cella per dietas quattuor. Sed audite mirum atque stupendum. Ipse disposuerat per talem viam pergere, unde numquam antea fuerat, nec aliquis ad eum inde venerat; et quocumque ibat, agnoscebatur. Referebat frater ille qui cum illo iverat, quod quadam die in sero isti quaerebant in quodam castro ubi possent hospitari, et pueri in platea ludentes, sicut solent serotino tempore, statim quod viderunt istos fratres, coeperunt dicere: *Ecce frater Petrus de Murrone, ecce frater Petrus de Murrone.* Et alio die progressi inde, alio sero, cum jam hospitati fuissent, ecce quidam sacerdos venit et conspexit illum, et dixit: *Vere tu es frater Petrus de Murrone;* et hoc dicebat omnibus. Ipse vero hoc audiens mirabatur. At postquam pervenit ad silvam memoratam cum fratre praedicto, intraverunt ad interiora illius silvae et pervenerunt ad cellam quorundam fratrum, quorum unus erat infirmus et senex, alter sanus et juvenis, qui numquam fratrem Petrum viderant, et videntes statim dixerunt: *Tu es frater Petrus de Murrone;* et coeperunt gratias Deo referre."[1]

This piteous flight of the old hermit in search of the peace that he had lost, recognised thus at every step, seems terribly parodied in his hopeless rush through the *buia campagna*, following the whirling

[1] *Op. cit.*, § 40 (*De fuga sua, quando fugit ad partes Apuliae*).

banner that seemed disdainful of all pause.[1] Like the children, the priest, and the friars, Dante instantly recognises the man whom he had probably, like them, never seen before; not to give thanks to God, but to stamp him with infamy in his poem: *l'ombra di colui che fece per viltà lo gran rifiuto.*

Dante may not have shared all the hopes that the Franciscan spirituals and others set upon Celestine at his elevation. But it was the office of the sovereign pontiff "to lead the human race to eternal life in accordance with things revealed";[2] for this the keys had been committed to him, the keys which Boniface's predecessor *non ebbe care;*[3] to shrink from this task, for his own spiritual consolation, was *lo gran rifiuto.* Thus, great saint though he doubtless was, Peter Celestine is the first of the condemned in the poem of which the end is "to remove those living in this life from the state of misery, and to lead them to the state of felicity."[4]

II

DANTE, JOACHIM, AND SIGER

It is uncertain what Dante actually knew about the life and doctrines of Joachim of Flora. As already stated, there are no grounds for supposing that he had read any of the Calabrian abbot's own writings. In the *Acta ampliora S. Dominici* of Theodoricus de Appoldia (which, as we have seen, he seems to echo in two places), he would have found Joachim represented as having foretold the coming of the Dominicans, and in the *Arbor Vitae Crucifixae Jesu*

[1] *Inf.* iii. 52-54.
[2] *Mon.* iii. 16, 77-79.
[3] *Inf.* xxvii. 103-105.
[4] *Epist.* x. 15.

of Ubertino da Casale (unquestionably among the sources of the sacred poem) he saw him depicted as a saint and as the prophet of St. Francis. If he was ignorant of the circumstances of the condemnation of Joachism in 1256 and the action of Bonaventura as minister-general in 1257, he might possibly have been misled by a passage in Ubertino into supposing that Bonaventura himself was a Joachist, or that he at least accepted Joachim as a true prophet:—

"*Vidi*, ait Joannes, *alterum angelum ascendentem ab ortu solis habentem signum Dei vivi* (Rev. vii. 2); ubi et dicit Joachin super Apocalipsim, Angelus iste est ille quem Christus per concordiam respicit futurus in principio tertii status. Sic ergo patet quod illuminatio data Joachin dicit in principio sexti status unum angelicum virum mundo dari: quem Christus per concordiam respicit: quia vitae Christi renovator singulariter apparebit. Et ego audivi a solenni doctore istius ordinis quod frater Bonaventura tunc generalis minister et doctor solennis, presente prefato doctore qui mihi dixit: quod in capitulo parisiensi solenniter predicavit: quod ipse erat certus et certificatus quod beatus Franciscus erat Angelus sexti signaculi, et quod ad litteram de ipso et ejus statu et ordine evangelista Joannes intellexit." [1]

Nowhere, in any of his sources, would Dante have found an explicit reference to Joachim's doctrine of the Everlasting Gospel, which is stated by Ubertino in a considerably modified form, and he may, therefore, not have realised that the theory of the law of the Holy Spirit, refuted by Aquinas in the *Summa Theologica*, is in reality the teaching of the Abbot of Flora.[2] On the other hand, he almost certainly knew

[1] *Arbor Vitae*, lib. v. cap. 3.
[2] *Summa Theologica*, I. ii., q. 106, a. 4. Cf. *Arbor Vitae*, lib. v. cap. 1.

the Angelical Doctor's commentary upon the *Sentences*, and could hardly have missed his discussion of the question, *Utrum tempus resurrectionis oporteat differri usque ad finem mundi*. Here Aquinas says that the length of time until the resurrection cannot be estimated by natural reason, nor known by revelation: "Quod enim (Christus) Apostolis quaerentibus noluit indicare (Acts i. 7), nec aliis revelabit. Unde illi omnes qui tempus praedictum numerare voluerunt, hactenus falsiloqui sunt inventi." He refers to Augustine's description of those who prophesied the number of persecutions that the Church must suffer until the coming of Antichrist from the analogy of the ten plagues of Egypt, as inspired *non prophetico spiritu, sed conjectura mentis humanae* (*De Civ. Dei*, xviii. 52), and applies this to Joachim: "Et similiter videtur esse de dictis abbatis Joachim, qui per tales conjecturas de futuris aliqua vera praedixit, et in aliquibus deceptus fuit." [1] We read a direct answer to this in the characterisation of Joachim in the sacred poem, *di spirito profetico dotato*.[2]

The case is somewhat similar with regard to Siger of Brabant, though here we have still fewer data to guide us. On the one hand, Dante may possibly have known, when he associated him with Albertus and Aquinas in Paradise, that Siger, while controverting these two great schoolmen by name, had spoken of both together in terms of the highest respect, as *precipui viri in philosophia Albertus et Thomas*,[3] and even that an attempt had been made by the Bishop of Paris to involve a portion of the teaching of Aquinas in the general condemnation

[1] *Commentum in Lib. IV. Sententiarum*, dist. xliii., q. 1, a. 3.
[2] *Par.* xii. 141.
[3] *Quaestiones de anima intellectiva*, iii. (ed. Mandonnet, p. 94). Also in the *Impossibilia*, iv. (ed. Baeumker, p. 17), he refers to *Albertus Coloniensis* and *Thomas de Aquino* (cf. *Par.* x. 97-99).

pronounced in 1277;[1] and, on the other hand, even if he had read the *De unitate intellectus*, he may have been ignorant of the fact that the anonymous opponent, so sharply rebuked and challenged by Aquinas at the end of that treatise, was no other than the doctor of Brabant.[2]

Francesco d'Ovidio observes: "Il problema di Sigieri non è interamente sciolto per l'esegesi dantesca, e io aspetto ancora chi mi dica nettamente quali fossero i *veri* di cui il tomista Dante gli faceva merito."[3] Certainly, the special doctrines of Siger and his school —the Averroïst doctrine of the intellectual soul, or possible intellect, as a unique principle outside of the individual, not multiplied with the multiplication of human bodies, and the virtual denial of the freedom of the will and of the action of God's providence— are utterly alien to the teaching of the *Divina Commedia*, and the former is directly controverted in the *Purgatorio*.[4] Nor is there conclusive evidence to support the plausible theory that Siger, when lecturing at Paris upon the *Politics* of Aristotle, had opposed the papal claims to temporal supremacy over kings and princes.[5]

Nevertheless, a confirmation of the usual interpretation of *invidiosi veri*, as "invidious truths" in the sense of truths that excited hostility against their proclaimer, may be found in Dante's words concerning the declaration of his own political creed, in the *De Monarchia:* "Cujus quidem veritas, quia sine

[1] Cf. Mandonnet, *op. cit.*, pp. ccxxxi.-ccxxxiv., cccxii.

[2] "Si quis autem gloriabundus de falsi nominis scientia velit contra haec quae scripsimus aliquid dicere, non loquatur in angulis, nec coram pueris, qui nesciunt de causis arduis judicare; sed contra hoc scriptum scribat, si audet; et inveniet non solum me, qui aliorum sum minimus, sed multos alios, qui veritatis sunt cultores, per quos ejus errori resistetur, vel ignorantiae consuletur" (*Opusc.* xv., *Opera, ed. cit.*, tom. xvi., p. 224).

[3] *Op. cit.*, p. 402.

[4] *Purg.* xxv. 62-66.

[5] Cf. Paget Toynbee, *Dante Dictionary* (art. "Sigieri").

rubore aliquorum emergere nequit, forsitan alicujus indignationis in me causa erit." [1] And that the poet perceived some analogy between Siger and himself seems further indicated by a comparison of his account of the former as one:—

> " che in pensieri
> Gravi a morir gli parve venir tardo ";[2]

with what he says about himself to Forese Donati:—

> " ' Non so,' rispos'io lui, ' quant' io mi viva;
> Ma già non fia il tornar mio tanto tosto,
> Ch'io non sia col voler prima alla riva.' " [3]

It is, perhaps, worth noting that both Siger and Dante represent themselves as puzzled over a question at issue between the Averroïsts and their orthodox opponents; the one, as to whether the *anima intellectiva* is multiplied by the multiplication of human bodies; the other, as to the creation of the primal matter of the elements. Thus Siger: " Et ideo dico propter difficultatem premissorum et quorumdam aliorum, quod mihi dubium fuit a longo tempore, quid via rationis naturalis in predicto problemate sit tenendum, et quid senserit Philosophus de dicta questione; et in tali dubio fidei adherendum est, quae omnem rationem humanam superat." [4] And Dante: " E con ciò fosse cosa che questa mia donna un poco li suoi dolci sembianti trasmutasse a me (massimamente in quelle parti ove io mirava e cercava se la prima materia degli elementi era da Dio intesa), per la qual cosa un poco da frequentare lo suo aspetto mi sostenni." [5]

The well-known lines in *Il Fiore*, a poem of the

[1] *Mon.* iii. 1, 9-12. [2] *Par.* x. 134-135. [3] *Purg.* xxiv. 76-78.
[4] *Quaestiones de anima intellectiva*, vii. *ad finem* (Mandonnet, p. 112).
[5] *Conv.* iv. 1, 60-66. But cf. Wicksteed's note, T. C. transl. of the *Convivio*, pp. 231-232.

last years of the thirteenth century, imitating the *Roman de la Rose* in a sonnet-sequence, bears testimony to the interest that Siger's fate excited in Italy:—

> "Mastro Sighier non andò guari lieto;
> A ghiado il fe' morire a gran dolore,
> Nella corte di Roma, ad Orbivieto." [1]

It seems clear that, whatever Dante may or may not have known concerning Siger, he regarded him as a witness to the claims of philosophical truth, and as a victim of unjust persecution. The identical positions occupied by Siger and Joachim in the two circles of the fourth heaven, with regard to Aquinas and Bonaventura respectively, are too striking to be a mere coincidence. In spite of the difficulties involved, I adhere to the view expressed in the text of the present work, and hold that Dante realised the full significance of thus placing these two spirits among the great teachers by the side of their respective opponents.

[1] *Il Fiore*, ed. F. Castets, son. xcii. The speaker is *Falsenbiante* (Hypocrisy).

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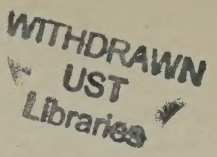

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